

NFL '92 PREVIEW

- The Hot Questions
- Joe Montana
- Ray Handley
- Ratings

INSIDE

SPORTS

AUGUST

1992

NFL '92

PRESEASON

PREVIEW

As the teams kick off their training camps, we give you the new faces, the new places, and the tight races

Plus:

Carlton Fisk's war with baseball

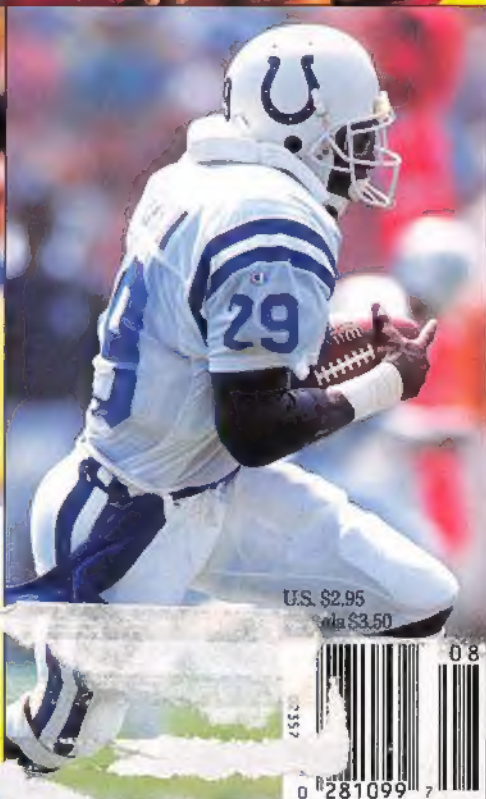
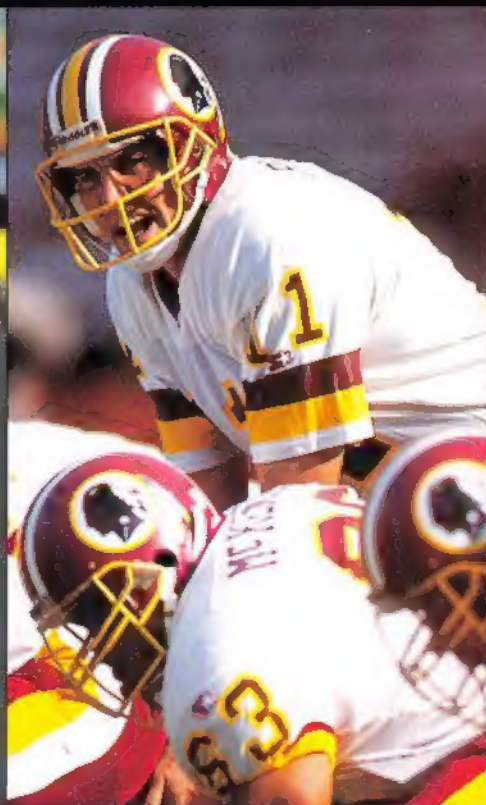
Bob Costas slides into the Olympic hot seat

Lewis vs. Powell: Rivals from Jump Street

Fay Vincent says baseball can't afford expansion

If Kevin Mitchell walks the walk, should he have to talk the talk?

Dave Anderson on Ray Handley's second (and last?) chance



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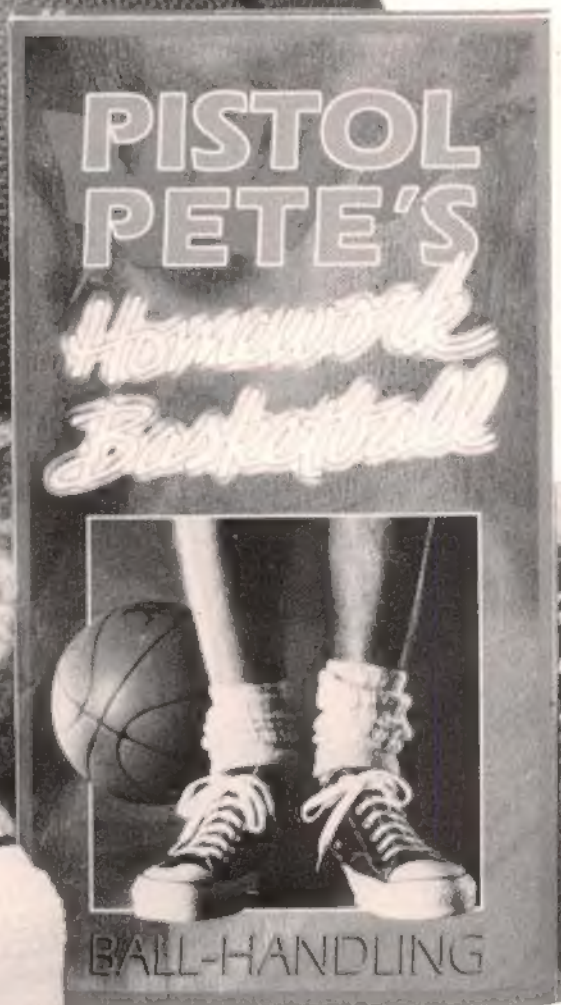
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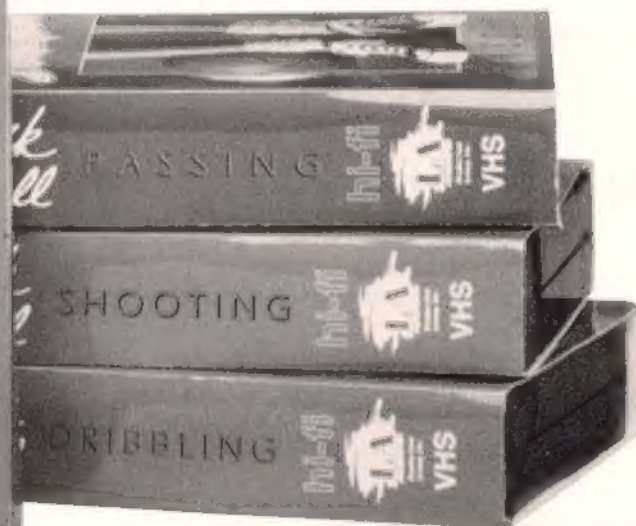
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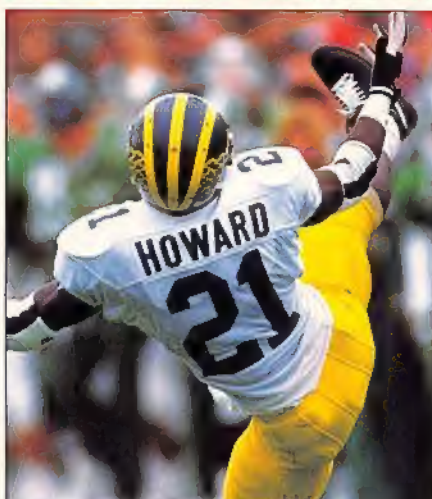
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Last battle for an old warrior? page 24



A new papoose in the Posse, page 38



An all-American rivalry, page 52

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

24 Interview: Carlton Fisk

Just short of catching's ultimate record, this grizzled veteran faces baseball mortality
By PAUL LADEWSKI

NFL Preseason Preview

30 Milking the Clock

Joe Montana's trying to beat Father Time with his greatest comeback yet
By IRA MILLER

34 Living in a Shadow

The specter of Bill Parcells still darkens Ray Handley's image in New York
By DAVE ANDERSON

38 What's the Skinny on the Skins?

Our Hot Questions section opens with the verdict on a Washington repeat
By GARY MYERS

46 When Chuck Knox Moves, Others Follow

Our Ratings & Inside Stuff shows you how the Rams coach is a trendsetter
By HOWARD BALZER

52 To Reign in Spain

Amid the myriad stories of the '92 Olympics, some stand out as golden
By TOM KERTES

59 Olympic Preview Capsules

A guide to the Summer Games' hottest matchups
By BARRY WILNER

66 Bill and Junior's Excellent Adventure

Two stock car legends have teamed up to dominate the NASCAR circuit
By JONATHAN INGRAM

70 Silent Thunder

If Kevin Mitchell isn't a bad guy, why is he on his fourth team in six years?
By PETER KORN

6 Editor's Note

8 The Insider

Baseball's Bottom Line
Olympic Cuisine
Society's Ugly Mirror

16 Media

Bob Costas and the Olympics
By BOB RUBIN

20 Inside Out

22 Pro & Con

The AL vs. the NL

78 Numbers

80 The Good Doctor

82 The Fan

It's Hip To Be a 49ers Fan
By HUEY LEWIS



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EDITOR'S NOTE

It's only been 18 months, but to New York Giants fans—and to Ray Handley, as well—it must seem quite a bit longer. In January 1991 the Giants pulled off the upset of the Buffalo Bills in Super Bowl XXV. Led by back-up quarterback Jeff Hostetler, the Giants offense controlled the game, making few mistakes and keeping the Bills' high-powered offense off the field. Four months later Giants head coach Bill Parcells resigned and Handley, the team's offensive coordinator, was named head coach. His first decision—and, many claim, his first mistake—was to name Hostetler the team's No. 1 quarterback ahead of veteran Phil Simms.

By the end of Handley's rookie campaign as head coach, the Giants were an error-prone, underachieving lot.

Critics, including Pulitzer Prize winning writer Dave Anderson, who pens this month's feature on Handley (see page 34), put much of the blame on the man at the top. "Parcells was much more of a people's coach," says Anderson. "He pressed psychological buttons. I don't think Handley has any of that psychological nonsense."

Anderson is not one of those who thought Handley needed a year or two to get comfortable with his new responsibilities. "He knew all of these guys from his years as an assistant. It's not like he was brought in from Denver, or someplace else. Most people think that all of his problems stemmed from when he picked Hostetler as his starting quarterback."

Last year our magazine picked the Giants to get back to the Super Bowl. And next month, in Part II of our NFL Preview, you can find out where we're picking them to finish this year.

Anderson is but one of the growing majority of Giants observers who don't see a happy ending to the '92 season for the team. "I'd be surprised if they finish 8-8 this year," he says. "This team isn't rebuilding. Unless the Giants finish the year strongly they may

have to make the playoffs for Handley to keep his job. He's [general manager George] Young's hand-picked guy, so he has that working for him."

Admittedly, Handley walked into a no-win situation last year. He replaced a popular coach, had little time to prepare for training camp, and immediately was forced to decide on his starting quarterback. This year he'll have his own assistant coaches in place and have the experience of a long rookie season to draw upon.

One of baseball's most enigmatic personalities is Kevin Mitchell of the Seattle Mariners, his fourth team in six years. Contributing writer Peter Korn says: "It would have been easy to portray Mitchell as a guy people don't like, and it would

have been easy to portray him as somebody who's been wronged, but the truth is somewhere in the middle. He's not really a brooder, but he is someone who wants to be left alone. He presents a tough exterior and appears unapproachable, but if he likes you he opens up. But that certainly doesn't absolve him of all the problems he's had off the field in."

Korn draws an analogy between Mitchell and Mike Tyson. "There are a lot of people who will call Mitchell the salt of the earth," Korn says, "but he gets into trouble when he hangs around his entourage of friends in San Diego."

Whether Mitchell will stay in Seattle—or whether Handley is able to keep his job with the Giants—remains to be seen. In any event, we'll be back next month with the second half of our NFL Preview, which will include features on Sam Wyche and Lawrence Taylor.



Giants fans probably won't accept another 8-8 season from Handley.

Vince Anderson

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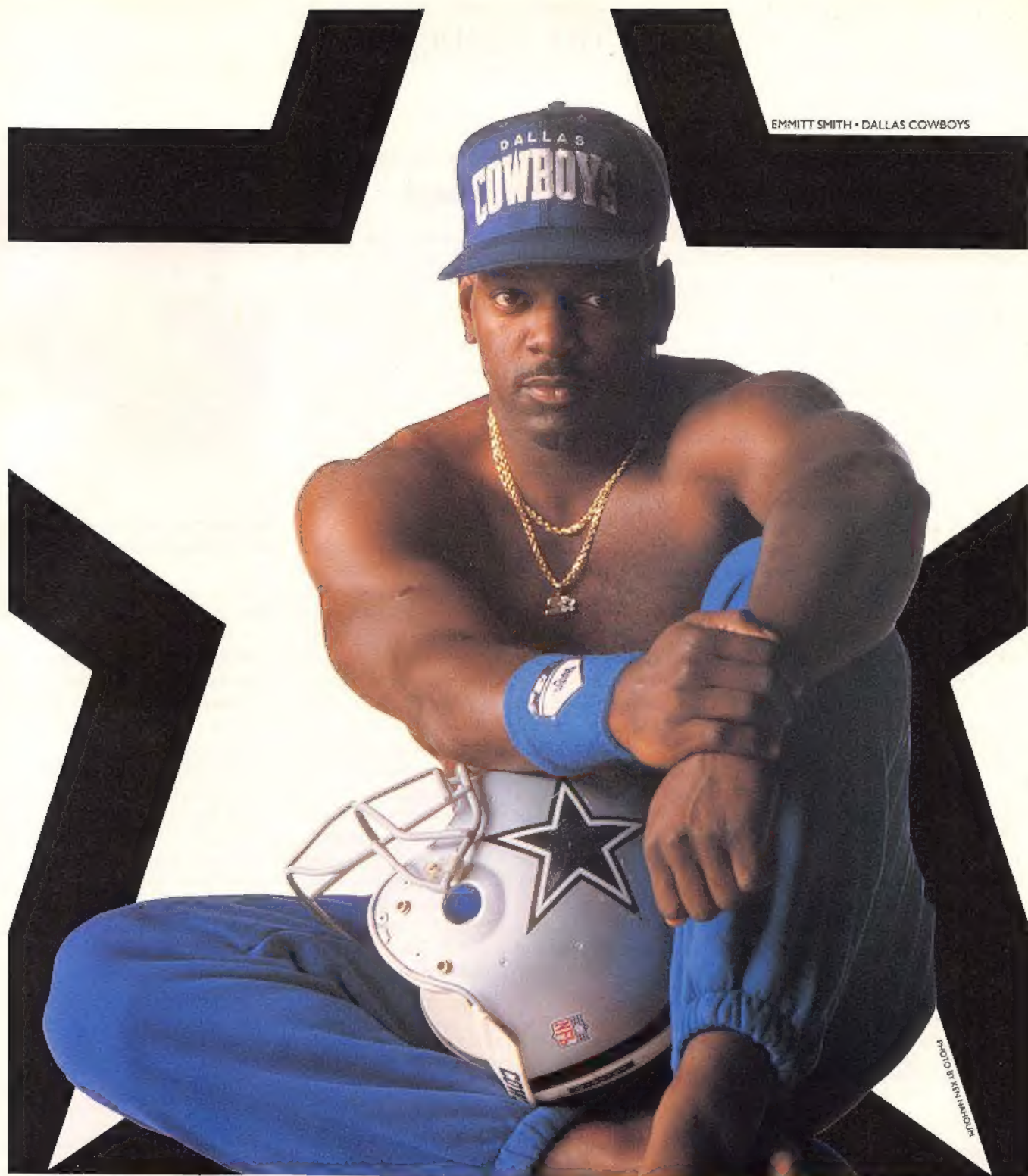


PHOTO BY KENNEDY

LOOK FOR THE STARS AND YOU'LL FIND

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Baseball's Expansion Meets a Contracting Economy

BASEBALL COMMISSIONER FAY VINCENT WASN'T OF A mind to mince words as he addressed the media during the 1991 summer baseball meetings in Santa Monica, Calif. The subject was the impending ratification of Denver and Miami as 1993 expansion sites, and the forecast was gloomy.

"The fact of the matter is," said Vincent, "expansion at this time does not make good business." And what did Colorado Rockies chairman John Antonucci think when he heard that? "I thought, 'He's absolutely right,'" he says.

It's true that major league baseball continues to set attendance records year after year, but ominous storm clouds have gathered on the horizon. For example:

- Salaries are spiraling up, up, and away. Since 1967 salaries have increased by more than 500%. In addition, a recent study showed that this season's average salary for 720 players had reached a record \$1,082,593. Ryne Sandberg? \$7 million, starting next season—and there's no end in sight.

- Baseball's TV contracts with CBS and ESPN expire at the close of the 1993 season, and every indication suggests the networks will not pay out such record sums come the next round of bargaining. Carl Barger, president of the expansion Florida Marlins, says, "There's a possibility of decreased revenue of up to \$8 million to \$10 million per team after 1993."

- The gap between large- and small-market teams continues to widen. The New York Mets' current payroll, tops in baseball, is \$44,326,001, an average of \$1,704,846 per man. On the other hand, the Cleveland Indians, owners of the league's lowest payroll, check in at \$8,497,500, or a piddling \$283,250 per player. Barger, who left the Pirates for Florida, says, "You can't have one team making six or seven times more than another." Adds John McHale Jr., vice president of the Rockies: "The way things are now, the future isn't terribly bright for small-market teams. We need some changes in areas such as revenue sharing and arbitration to ensure a degree of parity."

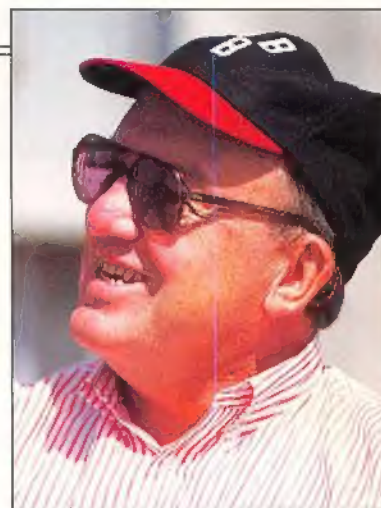
So how do you survive, much less flourish, if you're the Colorado Rockies and Florida Marlins? How do you survive in this economic climate? How do you survive after laying out a \$95 million expansion fee, not to mention covering the myriad start-up costs involved in creating a farm system? How do you survive when you're being denied the national TV contract money during the first year of operation in 1993? How do you survive if there is a strike or lockout next season? "You swallow hard," says Antonucci, "and you spend your money wisely."

Antonucci already has indicated the Rockies' first-year payroll will land somewhere between \$10 million and \$15 million, which would put them in a class with the three lowest payroll clubs in the league: Montreal (\$15,460,666), Houston (\$12,747,000), and Cleveland. The Marlins, who have the luxury of a much larger market than the Rockies, haven't established or won't divulge any payroll numbers.

However, the expansion teams' philosophies are clear: Build from within, and watch the bottom line. Big-money free agents should look elsewhere. It's no coincidence the Rockies tabbed Bob Gebhard and the Marlins chose Dave Dombrowski as general managers. Both come from organizations (Gebhard from Minnesota, Dombrowski from Montreal) that boast strong and productive farm systems.

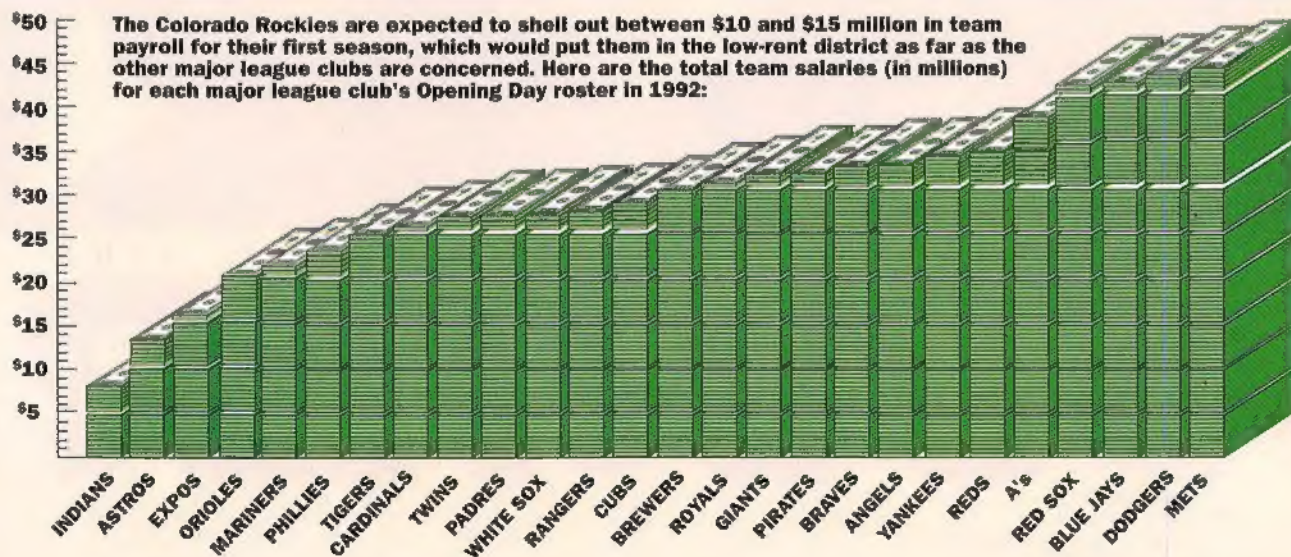
"Our primary emphasis will be on scouting and development," says McHale. "Let's face it: We don't have the luxury of being able to make mistakes."

—Bob Kravitz

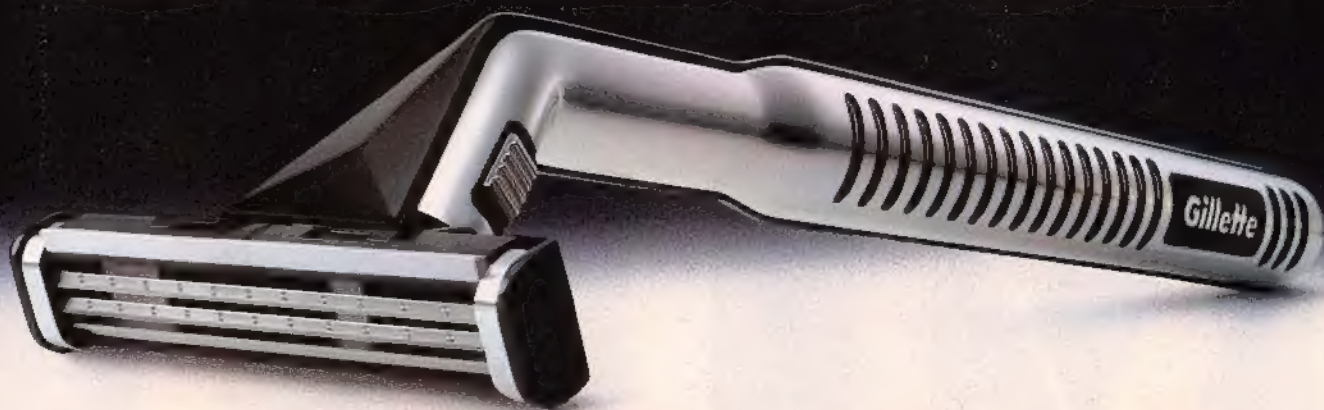


JONATHAN DANIEL/ALLSPORT

Vincent: The bottom line says that baseball should take it slow for now.



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STYLE

Junk Food Junkies Need Not Apply

ONE OF THE OLDEST COOK-books of the Western world was printed in Barcelona in 1477, and the Catalanian cuisine it extolled has been copied widely since. That bodes well for athletes and other members of the Olympic family, who are in for a culinary treat when the Summer Games convene in July.

Barcelona, the heart of Catalonia's heritage of gastronomic excellence, has launched a massive \$32 million Olympic catering plan that goes into effect the week before the Games as the first of 15,500 competitors arrive, along with thousands of coaches, judges, referees, delegation heads, Olympic VIPs, and members of the media. Everyone needs to be fed, and Olympic organizers expect to serve more than 2.3 million meals by the time the Olympic community bids Barcelona *adios*. Nearly a million of those meals will be consumed by athletes and coaches in two mammoth cafeterias (9,000 and 4,500 seats, respectively) at the Olympic Village.

The organizers aim to please, and in Barcelona caterers in the Olympic Villages have considered the needs of different cultures. They've categorized competitors according to region and thus dietary similarities, and planned the menu accordingly. According to their figures, athletes from Central and Northern Europe make up 35% of their clientele, 20% come from Southern Europe and Latin America, 15% are Anglo-Saxons, 15% are Oriental, 7.5% come from Northern Africa and the Near and Middle East, and 7.5% come from Central and Southern Africa.

Catering for the athletes is kept simple, since the host nation does not want to be responsible for a competitor's stomach problems the day of an event. Food common to each regional group will be available at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. For

example, athletes may select from a breakfast menu that features juice, milk, yogurt, cocoa, cheese, cereal, eggs, bacon, sausages, croissants, Mallorcan pastry, fresh fruit, coffee, teas, and assorted breads.

For the Olympic VIPs and the media, though, anything goes. The specialties that have made Catalanian cuisine famous will be prominent on the menu. That means

plenty of seafood, olive oil, and a abundance of

fresh fruits and vegetables at every meal. *Jabugo*, dried cured ham served with cold vegetables, will kick off a

typical lunch or dinner, along with avocado dotted with seafood. Octopus rings, monk fish in tomato sauce, and poached or grilled salmon will come next. For dessert there's *crema Catalan*, a custard famous in the region.

VIPs and the press can see the influence of noted Catalanian chef Jaime Font, who makes *paella*, a regional specialty, with pasta instead of rice. They can also see the influence of Clara Maria, Spain's answer to Julia Child, who runs the top cooking school in the country and has trained the nation's most important chefs.

If the way to a person's heart is through the stomach, International Olympic Committee president Juan Antonio Samaranch, a Barcelona native, should make a lot of friends this summer.

—Linda Kay

CULTURE

Society's Ugly Mirror

IN RECENT months three of pro sports' most prominent black athletes have spoken out on what they perceive to be racism in the media, the front office, and the clubhouse:

• Darryl Strawberry, from his recent book, on play-

ing in New York: "I felt as if I were playing baseball at Dred Scott Memorial Park in downtown Johannesburg instead of in the middle of New York City."

• Charles Barkley, Philadelphia 76ers star: "I'm a '90s nigger. The *Daily News*, the *Inquirer* have been on my back. Everything I do is wrong. They want their black athletes to be Uncle Toms. I told you white boys you've never heard of a '90s nigger. We do what we want."

• David Justice, Atlanta Braves slugger: "How many white players do you see get abused in the paper? We see it happen all the time with



Justice: Angry at abuse.

black players. No matter what you do, you're still a nigger. . . . There are a lot of guys on this team, but there are a few who I know use the 'N' word when I'm not around."

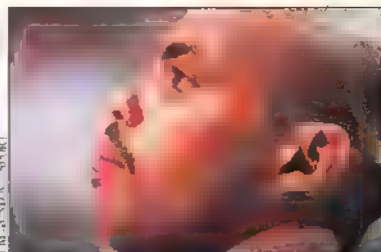
What's to be made of all of this? "I think it's quite healthy and certainly overdue," says Dr. Richard Lapchuck, director of the Center for the Study of Sport in Society at Boston's Northeastern University. "I've always been surprised that more black athletes don't speak out, considering how much race is a factor in sports. Racism exists in sports just as it exists in society. Sports has always been a mirror of society."

Art Rust Jr., a longtime New York radio sports-talk host and the co-author of Strawberry's book, views the honesty and courage of today's black athletes with a sense of pride. Rust, understand, was tweaking his white listeners on issues of race

long before Strawberry, Barkley, and Justice earned their first paycheck. "Racism is American as apple pie," he says. "Guys before, though, they never spoke about it. Years ago I was the only nigger doing it, but now these guys feel empowered.



'Dred' Strawberry



Barkley does what he wants.

Economics does that. The racism has always been there, but now you're dealing with these young turks."

According to Lapchuck, the type of racism has changed over the years. Now the black athlete is faced with a "more polite, subtle" form of prejudice. Where Jackie Robinson faced the everyday indignities of segregation and overt discrimination, today's black athletes confront a quiet but pernicious form of racism from front offices, fans, and media.

"I can remember when Bill White got the National League president job [in 1989], I was being interviewed on PBS, and they asked me, 'Is this the breakthrough baseball has been waiting for?'" says Lapchuck. "And I told them, back in 1975, when Frank Robinson became the first black manager, people said, 'This is it. This is the breakthrough.' [Nearly fifteen] years later, Frank Robinson was still the only black manager in baseball."

As for the media, Rust says one must look no further than the press box. "How many niggers do you see up there?" he asks. "White reporters just can't relate to a black guy. They don't understand what's going on sociologically. How can a white reporter relate to my problem?"

"I have this argument all the time with white reporters. Still, I don't care how deep and sensitive you are, you're not going to get it." —B.K.

UPDATE

A One-Man Volume of Hoops History

HE WATCHED LEW ALCINDOR, now known as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, play basketball in grammar school. He watched Kevin Loughery, now coach of the Miami Heat, play high school ball. He watched Donnie Walsh, president of Indiana

TEAMWORK

Pacers, play at Fordham Prep. Newspaper man Sam Goldaper was there to record history, and now he's become part of basketball lore himself. Goldaper recently was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame, in the media category.

Last fall Goldaper retired from *The New York Times* after nearly 20 years of covering the New York Knicks and nearly 50 years of covering basketball, period, from prep to college to pro. A broken hip precipitated his retirement but has done little to slow him down. "I'm busier now than ever," says Goldaper, who'll turn 70 in September.

Since retiring, Goldaper has become the official historian for *HOOP*, the NBA magazine, and also is senior writer for *Baseline Confidential*, a fan magazine published by the Knicks. Goldaper plans to write 50 memoirs over the next couple of years documenting outstanding moments in basketball antiquity.

"I was the first one to find Kareem," he recalls. "He was at a grammar school called St. Jude's in the Bronx. I didn't live far away at the time, and I used to see his mother at the shopping center. I got friendly with the family and with Kareem."

Goldaper filed his first story in 1939, for



NATHAN F. B. FLEK

Dapper Sam at 70: 'As long as I live, I'm going to stay involved.'

the newspaper *PM*. He was a sophomore in high school at the time. "Three scores for a dollar," he recalls. "I made about \$10 a week. I was rich." He started working full-time for the Brooklyn *Eagle* in 1943, and when the *Eagle* folded in 1955 he went to the *Herald-Tribune*, where he got more involved in college and pro basketball. He landed at *The New York Times* in 1967 and began covering the Knicks about six years later.

"I still go to every Knicks home game," says Goldaper, who also went to the McDonald's Open in Paris last year and to the 1992 All-Star Game in Orlando, courtesy of the NBA. "As long as I live, I'm going to stay involved."

—L. K.

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Yellowjackets—Live
Wires (GRP) 435-388

Spinal Tap—Break Like
The Wind (MCA) 435-339

"Phantom Of The Opera"
Highlights, Orig. London
Cast (Polydor) 424-333

Eagles—Grl Hits, 1971
75 (Asylum) 287-003

Grl. Hits Of The Outlaws
(Arista) 423-061

David Bowie—Changos-
bowie (Rykodisc) 412-247

Hollies—Epic Anthology
(Epic) 409-730

Lynyrd Skynyrd—
Skynyrd's Innards/Their
Grl Hits (MCA) 381-128

Roy Orbison—The All-
Time Hits Vols 1 & 2
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The Who—Who's Better
Who's Best (MCA) 376-657

Fleetwood Mac—Grl Hits
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Best Of The Doors (Epic)
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Note Years (Blue Note)
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The Sugar Cubes—Stick
Around For Joy
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Heaven And Hell (Epic)
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Street (Capitol) 433-110

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Neil Diamond—12
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(Full Moon/Epic) 317-149

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Light (Epic) 415-943

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late Collection (Warner
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By BOB RUBIN

This Time Costas Is Ready To Carry the Torch

THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS, important assignment to which any sportscaster could aspire was up for grabs, and Bob Costas was a prime contender. So what did Costas do? He recommended to his bosses at NBC that the job go to another man. NBC agreed, and Bryant Gumbel was named prime-time host of the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul.

"My thinking was that I could have gone and done a good job, and Dick Enberg could have, too, but Bryant answered some important criteria," Costas says. "He was primarily a host, and he had a national reputation featuring credibility in both news and sports. Plus the political situation in Korea was volatile, and he had the background to handle that—not that I couldn't have."

Costas' decision was a rare display of selflessness in an industry where self-promotion is the rule. "I want to have credibility with the people I work with and for, so if I request something I want it to be clear there's a good reason for it, that it makes sense," he says. "I don't want people thinking I'm just using power or leverage."

When it came time to consider potential prime-time hosts of NBC's coverage of the '92 Summer Games in Barcelona, though, Costas' No. 1 candidate was Costas. In saying so, he was being true to his code. He wasn't using power or leverage; Costas as NBC's point man in Barcelona makes compelling sense, and that's where he'll be when the torch is lit later this month.

"Now, four years later, I'm probably the logical choice," he says. "It probably would have been a 'pinch me' feeling if I had gotten



When NBC searched for a prime-time host of the '88 Olympics, Costas deferred to Bryant Gumbel's greater experience...

it in '88, but all the experiences I've had sort of ease me into it.

"I don't mean to sound cocky. This is the biggest assignment in my life, the biggest assignment in all of broadcasting, not just sports. I'll be reaching the biggest audience over a longer period of time than ever before. But I'm not stepping out of the chorus on opening night. I'll have butterflies, but no nightmares. This has been a natural progression for me."

That it has. Though he's only 5'7", Costas has become a big man in broadcasting—and not just in sports. He's NBC Sports' studio host for all seasons, he does a nationally syndicated Sunday night radio sports show that includes guests, and he hosts "Later With Bob Costas," a half-hour show that features one-on-one interviews with celebrities in a wide variety of fields, including sports. Unfortunately, it airs at 1:30 a.m., so you have to be unemployed or an insomniac to watch it regularly, but it's talking-heads TV at its best.

"A lady stopped me in the airport and said she loved the show because it's the only place she could see Eli Weisel one night and Smokey Robinson the next night and enjoy both of them for entirely different reasons," Costas says. "I want my career to have a little texture to it. If I can talk songwriting with Paul Simon one night and do a tough Q&A with Pete Rose the next night, I think I'm going in the right direction."

In all that he does, Costas is informed, intelligent, inquisitive, irreverent, and witty. That bodes well for the zillions of hours NBC

will be beaming back to us from Barcelona. We should be in for a treat, which will come as a welcome contrast to the disappointing job done by CBS co-hosts Tim McCarver and Paula Zahn at the Winter Games in Albertville, France. CBS took a huge gamble when it paired the best baseball analyst in the business with a morning news show hostess, and the gamble failed. McCarver and Zahn were stiff, bland, and dull, generating zero chemistry or credibility as a team. It's hard to imagine Costas not being terrific in Barcelona, though. He's terrific at everything else he does. He couldn't be stiff, bland, and dull if he tried.

As Costas says, it has been a natural progression to the pinnacle. He prepped for it in '88, when he was NBC's late-night host from Seoul. He was on the air nightly for two hours or so, starting at midnight, an experience he believes has proved invaluable for Barcelona.

"The exposure in '88 wasn't as large, but the responsibilities were very similar to



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those I face now," he says. "I learned what I needed to know, and perhaps just as important, what I didn't need to know. Going in, I thought I'd have to know our sixth-best butterfly swimmer, the Bulgarian weightlifters, and so forth, but encyclopedic knowledge isn't necessary. I don't have to pose as an expert on everything."

"What I do need is a good grasp of important story lines and the ability to find specific, detailed information when I need it for a breaking story. I need to have a reasonable grasp of the geopolitics involved in Barcelona, the broad strokes of Olympic history, and a reporter's natural curiosity and sense of drama."

Another valuable steppingstone to Barcelona for Costas was doing the world track and field championships from Japan last August. "It was practically a mini-Olympics, a dress rehearsal," he says. "It enabled me to familiarize myself with events and athletes I'll be covering in Barcelona."

Because of the 14-hour time difference from Seoul to America's East Coast, much of what Costas covered in '88 was live. That will not be the case in Barcelona, where most of what will be shown in prime time here will be taped. Whenever possible, though, Costas would prefer to be "live on tape" from Barcelona. That sounds like an oxymoron, but what he means is that he would like to be taped as he reacts live to an event whenever it happens, rather than reacting hours after the event and pretending it just happened. "Being perfectly smooth isn't as important as capturing legitimately spontaneous reactions," he says.

Fainting might be a legitimately spontaneous reaction. Barcelona will be a fear-some grind for Costas, a ridiculously boy-ish-looking 40 (at least going into the Games). He will be on the air from 7:30 to midnight every night for more than two weeks, but those four-plus hours in front of the camera represent only a fraction of his work day. "An average day for me will be from about 5 p.m. to 6 the following morning," he says. "I'll be sleeping from approximately 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. I plan to get to Barcelona a few weeks early to try to get used to the schedule."

As host, Costas will set the tone for NBC's coverage of the Games. Though by nature the Olympics lend themselves to excess, visual and verbal, don't look for excessive

flag waving, purple prose, or grandiosity from Costas. Look instead for perspective and a carefully measured rationing of hyperbole.

"Any reasonably sophisticated person can't believe the Olympic hype completely," he says. "Yes, the Olympic ideals matter and are worth celebrating, but they co-exist with an ugly kind of nationalism as well as an uplifting patriotism. There will be wonderfully compelling and dramatic stories, but there also will be squabbles, controversies, and politics, all of which must be treated journalistically—warts and all—rather than as theater."

"There's no conflict in reporting both kinds of stories. I'd feel remiss if we didn't."

Is there room for irreverence at the

of proportion, sentiment from him carried weight with his audience.

"I've talked to Jim a few times—he was a guest on 'Later'—and plan to talk to him again before I go to Barcelona, more than anything to tip my cap to him and let him know I'm trying to carry on the high standards he set. But I have no intention of copying him, Gumbel, or anyone else. It wouldn't ring true. I am occasionally sarcastic and irreverent, which I think comes across in a good-natured way, but the comments I make wouldn't work coming from Jim."

Costas is well aware that coverage of the Games is, well, an Olympian task, and that success depends on teamwork, starting at the top with Ebersol and co-executive producer Terry O'Neill and going all the way

down to the lowest gofer. "If Ebersol and O'Neill and the people they've hired for key positions have a good Olympics, then Bob Costas probably will," Costas says. "The quality of the coverage is dependent on the talent and energy of relatively faceless people, but it's the guy whose face is in front of the camera who gets the credit."

So let the Games begin. However, if Costas had to pick just one last assignment before being transported to the planet Zorg, it wouldn't be hosting the Olympics. No contest. It would be the World Series.

"Baseball has had an emotional hold on me since I was six or seven," Costas says. "Along with my family, it's the only thing that has been a part of my life since childhood. My father loved it, and now my little boy is starting to love it."

"Speaking professionally, baseball is the best setting for a sportscaster like me. Being a studio host is mostly about being a traffic cop, a craftsman who can connect the dots. Give the scores in 'X' amount of time, don't stumble, and get to the station break. But baseball covers the whole spectrum. You're a reporter, a historian, a conversationalist. The pace and rhythm really allow you to communicate."

Costas will do a World Series someday. He has been headed for it since he was six or seven. He won't have to use power or leverage; it'll just make sense. It's a natural progression. ■

Always pesky senior writer BOB RUBIN loves the Olympic Games, but as a veteran of the Miami sports scene he can't wait until shuffleboard is awarded full medal status.



...but now that the '92 Games have arrived, he's more than willing to run with the broadcasting world's biggest plum.

Olympics? "There better be, or they've got the wrong guy," Costas says. "Granted it was late at night, but Ahmad Rashad and I were off-beat and irreverent, when it was appropriate, in '88."

Costas and Rashad had fun with squid on a bun, a favorite Korean snack. Another time, in cutting to a volleyball game, Costas deadpanned, "And now the U.S. continues its quest for the gold against those always pesky Tunisians." That line still gets repeated by the Peacock people.

Anyone who hosts the Olympics inevitably is compared to Jim McKay, who did it so often and so well during ABC's glory years as the unquestioned leader in network sports. Costas is, of course, well aware of the McKay mystique and pays it homage.

"What worked for Jim can be applied to any success in our business: He was true to himself," Costas says. "When he was sentimental, he wasn't acting sentimental; it was genuine. And because he's such an intelligent, literate man and has such a fine sense

I remember that the six-millionth point in NBA history was scored during last season. Could you tell me who scored that historic basket, and how long ago the five-millionth point was scored?

K.S., Indianapolis

According to 76ers stat guru Harvey Pollack, Stacey Augmon of the Hawks record the six-millionth point with a driving layup against Golden State on March 23, 1992. Former Jazz point guard Rickey Green was credited with the NBA's five-millionth point with a three-point hoop on January 25, 1988.

How many basketball players have won both the Final Four outstanding player award and the NBA Finals MVP award?

H.B., Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.

Since 1969, the first year the NBA officially named an MVP of the Finals, seven players have won both of the awards: Wilt Chamberlain (Kansas 1957, Lakers 1972), Jerry West (West Virginia 1959, Lakers 1969), Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (UCLA 1967, '68, '69, Bucks '71, Lakers 1985), Bill Walton (UCLA 1972, '73, Trail Blazers 1977), Magic Johnson (Michigan State 1979, Lakers 1980, '82, '87), Isiah Thomas (Indiana 1981, Pistons 1990), and James Worthy (North Carolina 1982, Lakers 1988).

What is a "Hoya," as in the Georgetown Hoyas?

B.D., Vestal, N.Y.

According to Georgetown University, the explanation is as follows: Many years ago there was a team at Georgetown called the Stonewalls, and it is suggested that a student combined Greek and Latin terms and dubbed them *hoia saxa*—"what rocks!" Although nobody seems to know exactly when and under what circumstances the term "Hoya Saxa" was first used at Georgetown, there seems to be very little doubt about the derivation of the words. "Hoya" is from the Greek word *hoios*, meaning "such a" or "what a." The neuter plural of this word is *hoia*, which agrees with the neutral plural of the Latin

word *saxa*, meaning "rocks." Thus we have "hoya," substituting a "y" for the "i."

Last season the Twins' Scott Erickson won 20 games but only pitched 204 innings. Is that a record for fewest



Mr. Efficiency: In '91 Erickson won a lot of games—20, in fact—in just over 200 innings pitched.

Innings pitched for a 20-game winner?

G.W., Redmond, Wash.

Erickson came close, but the record was set by the Yankees' Bob Grim in 1954, who went 20-6 while pitching only 199 innings. Incidentally, Erickson's new teammate, John Smiley, set a National League record last year by going 20-8 while pitching 207.2 innings. The previous NL mark was held by Johnny Beazley, who went 21-6 with the 1942 Cardinals.

What would be the ruling in baseball if after a manager has used his entire bench (including pitchers), one of the nine remaining players gets ejected or injured?

A.J., Inglewood, Calif.

No rule exists to cover that situation, but the team would "probably have to play one man short," says Katy Feeney, National League spokeswoman. "It hasn't happened in recent history," Feeney adds, "but I can never say never because I wasn't here in 1876."

Since 1980, how many World Series have ended in a strike-out?

C.L., Miami

In the 12 Series since 1980, four have ended in whiffs, five have ended in pop-fly outs, and three have ended in groundouts. In '80 the Royals' Willie Wilson was struck out by the Phils' Tug McGraw; two years later the Brewers' Gorman Thomas went down swinging against Bruce Sutter of the Cardinals; in '86 Jesse Orosco fanned Marty Barrett to give the Mets a seven-game triumph over the Red Sox; and in '88 the Dodgers' Orel Hershiser struck out Tony Phillips of the A's.

Who hit the first home run at the Astrodome?

B.J., Memphis

The first official National League dinger was socked by Richie Allen of the Phillies on April 12, 1965, off Astros hurler Bob Bruce. However, the first Astrodome home run was hit by Mickey Mantle three days earlier in an exhibition game, the first baseball game ever played at the Astrodome.

Who was the highest NFL draft pick to be made eligible for Plan B free agency in 1992?

S.C., Benton, Ark.

Of the 166 Plan B free-agent signees in 1992, nine were former first-round draft picks, including the first pick overall from 1988, linebacker Aundray Bruce, who signed with the Los Angeles Raiders. The other former first-rounders to be placed on Plan B were linebacker Anthony Bell, fifth pick overall in 1986, signed by the Raiders; center Blair Bush, 16th overall in 1978, signed by the Los Angeles Rams; guard Ron Solt, 19th over-

all in 1984, signed by the the Indianapolis Colts; guard Mark May, 20th overall in 1981, signed by the Phoenix Cardinals; cornerback Jerry Gray, 21st overall in 1985, signed by the Houston Oilers; running back James Brooks, 24th overall in 1981, signed by the Cleveland Browns; offensive lineman Trevor Matich, 28th overall in 1985, signed by the Colts; and guard Brian Blados, 28th overall in 1984, signed by the Seattle Seahawks.

The New York Rangers captured the President's Trophy by accumulating the most points in the NHL this past season but failed to win the Stanley Cup. The Chicago Blackhawks captured the President's Trophy in the 1990-91 season but were ousted by the Minnesota North Stars in the first round. What was the last NHL team to win the President's Trophy and the Stanley Cup in the same season?

H.J., Seattle

The Calgary Flames were the last NHL team to accomplish this feat. The Flames won both the President's Trophy and Stanley Cup in the same season when the team finished the 1988-89 regular season with a 54-17-9 record for 117 points and then went on to defeat the Montreal Canadiens four games to two in the Stanley Cup Finals.

The Chicago White Sox always seem to play really long games. Can you tell me what team averaged the longest games over the course of last season in the American League?

P.P., West Allis, Wis.

The Detroit Tigers, with a mark of 2:59:30, led the American League in 1991 with the longest average nine-inning mark. The White Sox finished second with an average game of 2:58:30. The remaining teams rounding out the top 10 in the AL were the Boston Red Sox (2:57), Oakland A's (2:57), Baltimore Orioles (2:56), Texas Rangers (2:56), New York Yankees (2:54), Milwaukee Brewers (2:50:30), California Angels (2:50), and Toronto Blue Jays (2:50). ■

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Issue of the month:

The differences are numerous, but which league plays the better brand of baseball—the American or the National League?



Ken Harrelson

I'll concede two things to the National League: no designated hitter and shorter games. Otherwise, partner, the American League has it all over the National League. It ran right by 'em a couple of years ago. The strongest division in the NL is the West, but it wouldn't stack up with the the weakest in the AL, the East.

The AL West is the best, by far.

The AL has everything. There's real thunder over here. When you have a Jose Canseco and a Cecil Fielder and a Frank Thomas in the same league . . . well, it speaks for itself. And the Texas Rangers have the best offense in baseball. There's not a team in the NL that's even close to what those guys can do.

The better, younger players are in the AL, too. Oh my, yes! There's the Ken Griffey's, the Ruben Sierras, the Robin Venturas, the Roberto Alomars. The AL has drafted well for some time now. Too bad the NL fans can't see these guys.

The old guys, too. Having Nolan Ryan still around is one thing, but then you have "the Pudgester" [Carlton Fisk], Charlie Hough, George Brett, Dave Winfield.

Robin Yount, Kirby Puckett, Paul Molitor, and Joe Carter aren't that old, and they're still doing it. And what's going to be more fun in the next couple of years than watching Cal Ripken go after Lou Gehrig's record of 2,130 consecutive games?

The best relievers are in the AL. Bryan Harvey of the Angels—what a breaking ball! None better! Untouchable! He throws that thing 91, 92 miles an hour. I give him the edge over "the Eck Man" [Dennis Eckersley] only because he's younger. There are a whole bunch of other ones, too: Bobby Thigpen, Gregg Olson, Jeff Rardon, Rick Aguilera. Hey, Jeff Russell is one of the lesser guys, and he's still better than most of the guys in the NL. We haven't even mentioned Roger Clemens yet. He's the very symbol of starting pitching. The ultimate. The best. And check out that Toronto staff! Dave Stieb and Jack Morris and Jimmy Key and now that [Juan] Guzman kid. You've got other guys: "Black Jack" McDowell, those three lefties in California [Mark Langston, Chuck Finley, and Jim Abbott] and the Twins' guys [Scott Erickson, Kevin Tapani, and John Smiley].

The AL even has the better managers. Any league that's got Sparky Anderson has to be better, and I think Tony La Russa has turned into a fine manager. Bobby Valentine's developed, although you may not like his style. And Buck Rodgers is in this league now.

I'll take the AL stadiums, especially now with new Comiskey Park, Camden Yards, and in a few years, Cleveland's park.

So there you have it, partner. Give me the American League! ■

Ken (Hawk) Harrelson spent nine years as an American League outfielder. He later went on to be the general manager of the Chicago White Sox, the team for which he currently is a broadcaster.



Don Drysdale

I prefer the National League style of play.

It's a faster game. The game is supposed to be played with the pitcher in the lineup. It's a game that requires more strategy. I mean, it's not like a game of over-the-line—and that's basically what the American League style of play is, a high school game of over-the-line. You wait for the three-run homer. The only bit of strategy in the American League is when to hit-and-run. There's basically not that much to it, and if the managers over there who've managed in the National League were being honest, they'd tell you the same thing.

The style of play is quicker in the National League. There's more speed. You see pitchers challenging the hitters a little more with the fastball and not trying to finesse. They pitch inside more, try to take the second baseman out more on double plays. There's more stealing, taking the extra bases—trying to make things happen instead of just sitting around waiting for that three-run homer.

I don't like the designated hitter. That's still the key thing. It's kept a lot of high-priced, one-dimensional players in the league. If it wasn't for the DH they'd be in another line of work. It becomes a retreat for one-dimensional players. What the DH did do was ruin a lot of good, young arms. There aren't many managers who know much about pitching. They say pitchers can't throw every four days because they're not strong enough, but because of the DH the managers keep them in ball games that in the National League they'd be out of. Since the DH has come in they have probably ruined more good arms than at any time in the history of baseball.

There are a lot of people who say, "I don't like 1-0, 2-1 ball games. Why let a pitcher hit when he's an automatic out?" Well, that's b.s. There have been a few pitchers who've been able to swing the bat. And you can have kids go through high school, American Legion ball, college ball, and get drafted by a National League club—and they've never swung a bat! That's an absolute crime. That isn't what the game is about. That's like driving a car with three wheels.

The strategy makes it more interesting: when to leave a pitcher in, when to take him out for a pinch-hitter, double-switches—hell, I've seen triple-switches. I've seen pitchers go to the outfield for one hitter and then come back and pitch again. The American League lineup is like a revolving door. It's baseball; it's just not my style of baseball. It's a different game.

The more strategy there is, the more second-guessing there is—and that's part of the game for fans and it has been for years. It's the Monday morning quarterback. To take things like that away from the game—well, I'm a traditionalist in that respect. It's like changing the Bible. I wouldn't agree with that, either. ■

Hall-of-fame pitcher Don Drysdale won 209 games in his 14-year career with the Brooklyn and Los Angeles Dodgers. Today he calls the Dodgers action from the broadcast booth.

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INSIDE INTERVIEW

By PAUL LADEWSKI

Carlton Fisk

With the ultimate catching record within reach, the grizzled backstop has been forced to face his baseball mortality

FINALLY, AT THE RIPE YOUNG AGE of 44, Carlton Ernest Fisk no longer may be able to spit in the face of baseball logic that suggests athletes of his age are best suited for fantasy camps, old-timers' games, and Polident commercials. Only 79 short in his bid to surpass Bob Boone for the most games caught in a career (perhaps the most telling record at his position), Fisk instead encountered bone spurs and an inflamed tendon in his right foot last spring. The lingering ache kept him out of action and led to whispers of retirement—if not from him, then from those critics who had all but retired him a decade earlier. Even so, if this hard-bitten warrior—who has been held together for 21 seasons by a fierce pride and competitive spirit, an uncompromising work ethic, and countless rolls of tape—was on his last legs, then only the man known as “Pudge” seemed to know for certain.

To be sure, the road to Cooperstown hasn't been all confetti and blaring sirens for the pride of Bellow Falls, Vt. Considered by many to be a Fenway Parker for life even now, Fisk did the unthinkable in 1982 after an arbiter ruled that the Red Sox had mailed his contract two days after the deadline stipulated by league rules: He changed his Sox as a free agent. For each of the last few seasons in Chicago, Fisk has had to reclaim his job in the face of far less experienced and productive competition. Prior to this season, following a campaign that saw him ranked as the American League's highest rated catcher, he was offered a pay cut by the White Sox—thank you very much—before he finally agreed to an incentive-laden contract that was extended only after a storm of protest by the local faithful.

Yet nobody can deny Fisk's astounding durability and productivity at the most demanding of positions. Entering the '92

campaign, he was one of only three receivers—Hall-of-Famers Yogi Berra and Johnny Bench being the others—to total at least 300 home runs, 1,000 runs, and 1,000 RBIs in their careers. He and Bench were born in the same month and year (December 1947), yet in the eight seasons that Bench has been retired Fisk has produced 163 home runs and 541 RBIs. Is George Burns proud of this guy or what?

While many observers agree that Fisk has been the victim of the outmoded mindset that permeates the game today, others perceive him to be a bitter old cuss. Admittedly, Fisk has never been at a loss for insightful opinions, only a handful of which can be fit into print. Herewith is a sampler of his views about his career and his profession:

INSIDE SPORTS: At this point of your career, do you approach each season as though it could be your last?

CARLTON FISK: I try to train and prepare myself to be the best that I can be. I don't prepare for it to be my last. I've had success doing it that way, and I'd like to continue it as long as I can. Sometimes you get confused when you do well and yet people keep saying they want somebody else to take your place or that they're going to give your job away. Rather than, “We like you, we want you, we need you,” basically they say, “We want to get rid of you.”

IS: Along those lines, will your recent foot injury provide the White Sox with a convenient reason to give you a pink slip at the end of the season?

CF: I'm sure that it will, not that they need one.

IS: Given the importance of two strong feet for someone at your position, do you consider yours to be a career-threatening injury?

CF: Career-threatening? Every injury at my age is supposed to be life-threatening—at least that's what most people seem to think, anyway. I'll say this for it: It led to a lot of disappointment and frustration. Originally, when the injury occurred in spring training, I thought that I would be ready for Opening Day. Then the timetable was pushed back to June, then to July. In April I decided to grow a beard until I returned to the lineup because I thought it would keep my face warm in the cold weather, but I had to reconsider the idea or else I might have looked like Rip Van Winkle.

IS: Realistically, how much longer can you play?

CF: If I ever get over this foot thing, then there's no telling. I really don't like to put an end to my career. I don't think I've been close to the end, ever. Once you say, “OK, maybe next year, maybe next year,” it's a countdown to the end. You're not maintaining a level of intensity; you're decelerating to the end of your career. I've never thought about the end, only about preparing for now, preparing for this season. When enough todays go by the season is over, and you start preparing for the next one.

IS: Nevertheless, regardless of production, there isn't much demand for fortysomething catchers, is there?

CF: Who knows what the market is? Nobody has ever been here before.

IS: You didn't get any nibbles as a free agent, did you?

CF: You have to understand the circumstances. I was a 44-year-old Type-A free agent who would have cost some team a first-round draft choice to sign.

IS: Are the present rules stacked against veteran players?

CF: Absolutely, but the rules are the least of an older player's worries. It's the people within the game and their perceptions of



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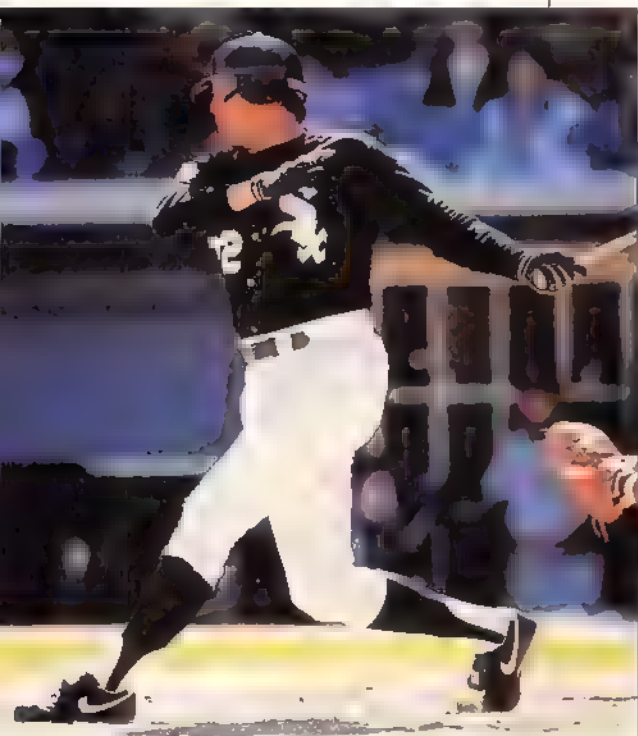


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what an older player should be that concern him. An older player can't hit. He can't run. He can't throw. He's too fat. He's out of shape. He's not strong enough. He's not young enough . . . you could go on and on and on. Most people in the game today perceive an older player in the same light as they would one 30 years ago. They say, "I remember when I was 35 I couldn't play." There have been only a handful of guys who stuck around after they turned 40. Yaz played a little bit. Pete Rose. Darrell Evans. Phil Niekro. Charlie Hough. Nolan Ryan—and remember, pitchers are in a different category. People don't understand why or how [Fisk has lasted], so maybe out of confusion



Fisk's swing reflects Hrinia's tenets.

they say, "Hell, if we get rid of him we don't have to worry about it." I'm sailing in uncharted waters, and I'm doing the charting as I'm going along.

IS: Has the fact that you're a special case distorted baseball's view of what you really are?

CF: You can't play this game robotically or by the numbers. You can't free-lance it, because there has to be a plan. It has to be played with an emotion and a passion that allows you to express your talents. Once you funnel everybody's talents down the same chute you've lost many of those talents; then you have a group of players that looks the same, swings the same, throws the same, and runs the same. You can suppress people's talents and clone their thought processes, but you're compromising their emotions. Nobody is the same. If you tell athletes, "OK, here's a six-lane highway, pick

your lane and run," they'll pick different lanes—but as long as they're all going north and they're all going fast, let the horses run.

IS: Is that a common mistake of personnel honchos today?

CF: Absolutely. If you had tried to harness Reggie Jackson into the same approach and personality as a Wade Boggs or a Wally Joyner or a Robin Ventura, do you think he would have been Mr. October? Would he have been successful if you hadn't allowed him to step onto the stage and capture the moment? Some managers tried to do that with Dick Allen. Maybe Chuck Tanner took it a little too far the other way, but Dick came and played under him. Presto—37

dongs, 113 RBIs, MVP. Once they put him into the jar, though, Dick lost his passion for the game.

IS: Would Bill (Spaceman) Lee captain your All-Different Strokes team?

CF: I'll tell you, Bill talked some weird stuff, but what people forget is that he could sure pitch, so much so that I'd rank him with Luis Tiant, Gary Peters, Richard Dotson, LaMarr Hoyt, and Bobby Thigpen as the best pitchers I've caught. Not only did he give us 17 wins and 260-plus innings, but he did it in Fenway Park at a time when there were no bullpen closers to get him out of trouble.

IS: Why are so many people so eager to tag your toe and zip the bag on your career?

CF: If you find that out, then please, please inform the rest of us. I mean, they've been on that cruise since '83. They even told me, "Hey, if you want to go, then go. We won't stand in your way. We won't even ask for any com-

pensation."

IS: Is your situation indicative of the way society views older people as a whole?

CF: I don't think so. People always want to attack success to some degree, especially in a young man's game. You don't see the same approach taken to other players. Don't take this to mean I'm whining about Dan Pasqua, because I love the guy, but the way they approached his off-field problems and the way they approached my situation last winter is an example of what we're talking about. Steve Howe is another one. "Oh, Stevie, come back and pitch, come back and pitch." Then you see some guy who's busting his ass to pitch, and it's "See ya."

IS: On the scale of respect, don't you deserve to be at a level with Ryan, another golden oldie who has a reservation in Cooperstown?

CF: The Rangers revel in the fact that Nolan

is a phenomenon and a resource. They promote it and invite people, if they're not acquainted with it, to get acquainted with it and to identify that his kind helped build America. I mean, they go right through the entire thing: hard work, good work, and the rewards of it. I wouldn't say I deserve any more than that, but the fact that I play every day at a more demanding position should say something for me. It's been hashed over so many times that it's time to concern myself with something else. The main thing is that my kids know I'm something special, and I know they're something special.

IS: When you suffered through injury-shortened third and fourth seasons, did you have the foggiest notion that you would play into your 40s?

CF: I played hard, was in the middle of the battle, and got scarred by the battle. I didn't get hurt because I was taking out the garbage; I got hurt playing the game. Realistically, my career should have been over within a year or two after I had my knee problems in '74, but it wasn't. For one, I was too naive not to believe that if I worked hard I could come back. With that mindset, there wasn't enough that I could do. I did it, and here I am.

IS: How do you account for your durability?

CF: I've trained to be durable. I've probably had to be more mentally durable than physically durable, but I've been both. It's work. You have to train your body to handle the rigors of the task at hand, and when you train hard physically you also train your mind to focus, to sacrifice, to commit, to work, to push. That is what makes you stronger.

IS: Do you see that same work ethic in younger players today?

CF: To a certain degree they have to be tough physically and mentally, but it's a more paved road for them than it was for the rest of us. It's smoother for them.

IS: What's your proudest achievement?

CF: Probably to have a wife and kids who still call me "Dad" and love me and kiss me when I'm going and kiss me when I'm coming, no matter how big those teenaged muscleheads seem to think they are.

IS: How about baseball?

CF: Rather than go through it point by point, maybe it's that I didn't let the bastards get me down, even though they sure as hell have tried.

IS: What do you remember most about Boston?

CF: My kids were small and young.

IS: You don't regret leaving there?

CF: I don't think so. I don't regret it.

IS: Yet isn't it true that some people consider you a Red Sox then, now, and forever?

CF: Some people still think I play for them—can you believe that? Some people



'Don't play for records. Play to help your team win.'

think that once I left there I haven't played anymore. I've had people ask me the last four or five years, "Are you still playing with the Red Sox?" *[Laughs.]* I was in Port Charlotte [Fla.] this spring, and some fella said *[Fisk begins to speak with a New England accent]*, "Hey, Cahilton, I remembah you in Bahston. Get ovah here and sign this. Get ovah here and sign this program." I said, "Really, I'm sorry, but I can't. I've got to get dressed and get on the field." Then the guy said, "I nevah thought you were that good in Bahston anyway." *[Laughs.]*

Another time I was in Boston and a guy above the dugout said, "Hey, get ovah here." Not, "Please could I have your autograph," but "Hey, get ovah here and sign this." I said, "Sorry, I've got to loosen up and get ready for the game." The guy yelled back, "I hope you break your _____ arm." *[Laughs.]* What the hell is this game coming to? *[Laughs again.]*

IS: Even after all these years, are you still surprised the Red Sox allowed you to become a free agent?

CF: That was a long time ago. I was surprised at the time. I'm surprised at what has happened to me in Chicago, too.

IS: Do you have any fears?

CF: Yeah. My youngest daughter got her driver's license in April. That scares me. *[Laughs.]* I have a lot of fears, mostly fears of the unknown. I don't know if you would call them fears, maybe doubts along the lines of "what happens if"—not only about my career, but my life in general. When the

been had I been another position player. I probably wouldn't have blown out my knees and elbows.

IS: So why did you become a catcher?

CF: At the time I was scouted I had mostly been a pitcher, but I wanted to play every day. There weren't many catchers on the way, and several scouts told me that the major leagues were starving for them. Johnny Bench, Thurman Munson, Gary Carter, Lance Parrish, Jim Sundberg, Bob Boone, and I came along at the same time, maybe because organizations were looking for catchers.

IS: What people were most influential in your development?

CF: A couple of guys helped me jump from one level to another to the point that the light bulb went on inside my head. One was Rac Slider, my first manager in Double-A ball. At Triple-A Darrell Johnson taught me how to catch and think, as opposed to just putting down some fingers and wondering what would happen. He had some rhyme and reason for what he thought would happen, and it worked. That opened my eyes to the position more than I had known. As for the offensive part, Charlie Lau and Walt Hriniak have been the most influential.

IS: What are the biggest myths about the position?

CF: That it's easy to play, that catchers are nonathletes, that [the mask and glove] are the tools of ignorance, that foul balls don't hurt. Most people think they understand

insecurities of a normal human being begin to surface, you have to say, "OK, let's be rational about this. Let's figure this out." Then you chart your course and try to be somewhat flexible along the way.

IS: What's the smartest thing you've ever done in baseball?

CF: I became a catcher.

IS: What's the dumbest thing you've ever done?

CF: Probably that I became a catcher. *[Laughs.]* When I was 17, I had one scout tell me that if I signed a contract it should be as a shortstop. Sometimes I wonder how much better I would have

what it takes to be a major league player. People in the media think they understand because they're around the game, but unless they've competed at this level they can't possibly know what it takes to be a good player, what it takes to be the best catcher. Some players are so good that you think, "This game is easy. You pitch, you hit, you field, you run, you win. Geez, it's just like I played it in high school." Some guys make it look relatively easy, to the point that people say, "How can you pay that guy \$7 million?" Well, because he's the best at his position in the world, that's why.

IS: Does any one record mean the most to you?

CF: You never play this game for the records. You play to do well and help your team win. If you accomplish a lot of things along the way it comes with playing. One thing I think about on occasion when guys such as yourself bring it up is that I've played a number of years, but most people don't realize I've missed approximately 5½ years because of injuries. Of course, there's also the compromised playing time that you put in coming off a major knee surgery. To have a chance to achieve the games-caught record wasn't fathomable 10 years ago for those reasons. That might be the most coveted record I may get, because it means I played well for a long time and overcame a lot of obstacles and misperceptions.

IS: Yet you'll be best remembered for the dramatic home run you hit in the 1975 World Series, won't you?

CF: I don't remember much about it. That was 17 years ago—can you believe that? It seems as though it happened to a different person, maybe because I never dwelled on it. The sad part about it is that most people think that was the only thing that has ever happened in my career. Because it was so visible, it has grown in people's minds.

IS: What will you do after you retire?

CF: Probably plant a lot of azalea bushes in my yard, one for every time I miss the competition and the camaraderie.

IS: What will you miss most about baseball when—or is it if?—you retire?

CF: I don't know that yet. After I'm out of it I'll be able to tell you. I know I'll miss the clubhouse atmosphere, the one-on-one confrontations, the bases loaded with no outs in the 7th inning, the extra hitting in the cage with Walter and the rest of the guys. Once you're out of the game I don't think you'll ever find anything that can replace the game for the demands and relationships it makes. ■

Senior writer PAUL LADEWSKI has been a long-time observer of Fisk, ever since the days when Pudge was in a battle with Bob Montgomery as the Sox starting backstop.

Milking the Clock

Joe Montana has never given in to the odds, but this would be a comeback for the ages

By IRA MILLER

IT WAS SOMETHING OF A RUNNING joke among the 49ers and the Bay Area media for a couple of years. Whenever Joe Montana held a press conference, there was one reporter who invariably would ask him if he was thinking about retirement.

The question—and the answer, because even Montana began to take it in good humor—usually was good for a few laughs. However, as injuries mounted and Montana missed games—indeed, missed the entire 1991 season—it seemed inevitable that the end of a fabled career was approaching. In fact, as the 36-year-old Montana prepares for the 1992 season, he has had surgery four times since he last played in an NFL game: an operation to repair a broken finger following the NFC Championship Game in January 1991, surgery to reattach a tendon in his passing elbow last October, arthroscopic surgery on a knee in March, and minor surgery to repair scar tissue in his elbow in May.

The obvious approach of the end has had an unexpected effect: The question of how much longer Montana will play is not asked as much anymore. This may seem strange, but consider the nature of the man. Montana has always defied the odds. He returned successfully from his 1986 back surgery to win two more Super Bowls, playing his best football when he had nothing left to prove, and now he seems ready to brush aside the elbow surgery as just another pesky distraction on the road to Canton, Ohio.

After his surgery last fall, doctors said Montana probably could begin to throw again in May, perhaps April. Instead, he was throwing in January and was up to 50 yards by April. In a pre-draft minicamp it was hard to tell anything was different, although 38 members of the media—some representing

newspapers from as far away as New York and Tokyo—came to see for themselves.

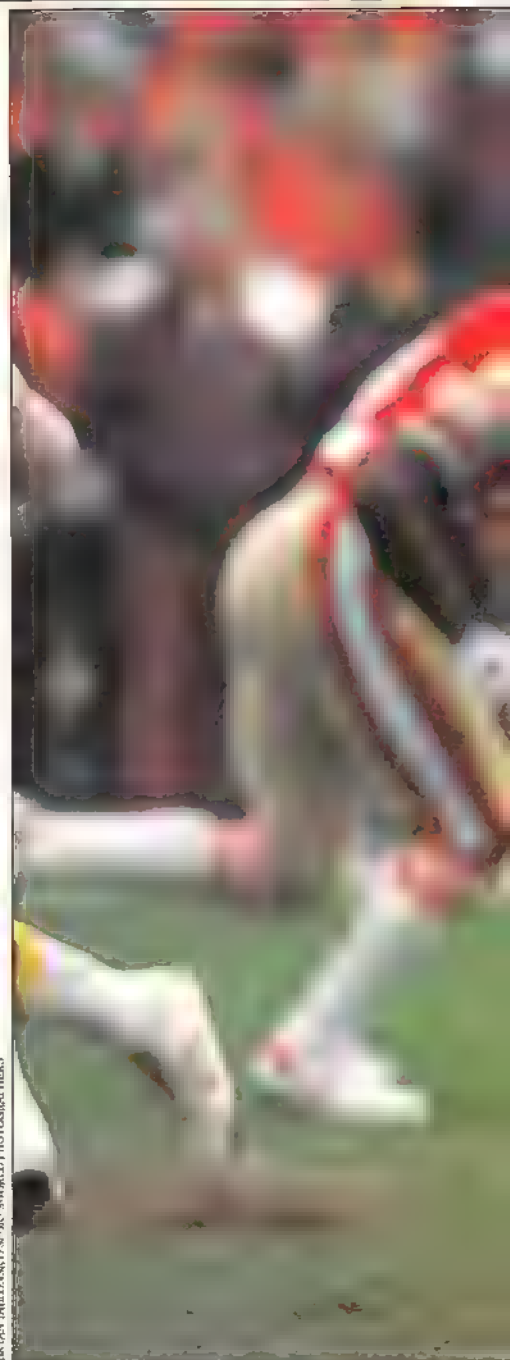
"He's shown more dedication, more courage, more persistence in playing than I thought anyone would," says Bill Walsh, who drafted Montana in 1979 and coached him for the first 10 years of his career. "I haven't seen a man like that, who thrived on playing because he'd reached all of the tangible goals you can reach.

"A lot of people would let down or find a way to step away, but this has not even distracted him. He's just kept right on going. Typically, someone who's won four Super Bowls or won every major award there is in sports would be less motivated and more into show business, or more into public appearances and things. Joe's been just the other way. Joe has seen less and less of the public and been concentrating more and more on football. He just absolutely loves to play."

Montana has a simple explanation: When it's over it's over, he says, and the longer he has played the more the games have meant to him. As a matter of fact, he already has modified his once-professed goal of simply fulfilling his contract, which runs through the 1993 season, when he would be 37 years old. Now he wants to play beyond that.

"It's just too much fun," he says. "I enjoy it. You enjoy the time off. It's a game, you know, so it's fun. It's not like work. During the week it is, but even out there [on the practice field] it's fun, too. Probably the closer you get to retirement, the more you try to savor things. I know that I'll never be back to it again, never have the opportunity."

Of course, wanting to continue and being able to continue are not the same thing. It



BRYAN YARLOSKY/SPORTSWORLD PHOTOGRAPHERS

might not be a coincidence that the successful twilight years of Montana's career occurred after Walsh brought in Steve Young to wait in the wings. It has been a long wait for Young. Leigh Steinberg, Young's agent, believes that Montana will play as long as Young remains in the picture, that it's Young's presence, as much as any factor, that keeps Montana's competitive fires burning. At any rate, Montana clearly is in no hurry to get out of the way so Young can take over.

That's not a bad explanation for what keeps Montana humming, but even before Young arrived as a legitimate heir to the throne Montana believed Walsh was trying to push him aside prematurely. The eventual Hall of Fame coach and quarterback



He's virtually cornered the market on persistence, but even Montana can't outrun Father Time forever.

seem to have patched up their differences now that Walsh is more than three years removed, but the coolness between them was noticeable toward the end of Walsh's days with the 49ers.

Montana realizes his career will end—he is keenly aware of that—but he would no more acknowledge Father Time than he would acknowledge the physical prowess of an opponent. His approach to aging is similar to his attitude when he eluded former Dallas Cowboy Ed (Too Tall) Jones to throw the touchdown pass to Dwight Clark in the 1981 NFC Championship Game that launched the 49ers' glory days. Despite the glaring inequity in size, Montana nonethe-

less gestured and screamed an epithet at Jones. Now he's shouting the same thing at the calendar.

"I'm reaching the end of my career, and everyone is looking for that one thing that's going to make me step away," Montana says, "and I think a lot of people felt like this might be it. I don't know what it will be. It seems like every time I have an injury it's the one that's going to end my career. You go back and look at other guys who get hurt and just keep coming back, and you never see that [written] about those guys. But for some reason, as soon as I get hurt I get that 'one more injury to add to his list.' None of them are ever serious. Everybody makes

them out to be much more serious than they actually are."

Of course, most people, even football players, would consider back surgery to be significant. Most quarterbacks would consider surgery on their passing elbow to be major. Why doesn't Montana? "He has a great enthusiasm for playing, and he will minimize any injuries that he's had when he talks to you about it," says Walsh, recalling his days as Montana's coach. "He'd minimize the injuries: 'It was only this, it was only that.'"

"There is a certain fiber in Joe Montana that you rarely see and often can only see if it's a quarterback or somebody that handles

the ball. A lineman could have that same disposition, but not that many people would be alert to it. But with Joe, it's so out there and so visible that he is just absolutely a truly great competitor and he thrives on the game. It's his very existence."

As a matter of fact, much of the tension that developed between Walsh and Montana when they were coach and player centered around Montana's health, especially in the 1988 season. That year the two dueled over Walsh's belief that Montana was run down and needed a rest. Walsh, of course, won the battle. After a two-game rest Montana came back strongly to rally the 49ers, who at one time languished at 6-5, to a Super Bowl title.

Over the last six seasons Montana has missed more than a third (32 of 92) of the 49ers' nonstrike regular-season starts—and Walsh says he saw this coming. The longer one plays, he says, it's "more likely there will be injuries." He always thought the slender Montana ("built like a basketball player") could not sufficiently fortify himself against the inevitable pounding.

"He's not built like Terry Bradshaw or one of those kind of guys," Walsh says of the 6'2", 192-pound passer. "We knew that the possibility of injury would always be there with Joe more so than with some other quarterbacks. I think the next serious injury, the next injury of consequence, could almost force him to re-evaluate—if he were to have another injury like he had in both Giants games [a severe concussion in an '86 playoff game and the broken finger in '91], something like that. He doesn't talk about those

things at all. He just doesn't address those kinds of things."

"I'm not very negative," Montana says. "Just like they always ask me, 'What are you going to do when you're done with football?' Right now my whole thing is I don't want to hear about how it's going to feel when I retire because I'm not looking forward to that. I don't want it in my mind, 'What am I going to do after I retire?' because it distracts me mentally."

While Montana won't talk about what he has done to prepare for the day he can play no more, it's clear he and the 49ers have done all they can to put that to put that day off as long as they can. Their precautions fall under the headings of conditioning and play-calling.

Conditioning: Montana never will be confused with Hulk Hogan, but after his back surgery in '86 he did begin to do more work with weights to strengthen himself. He now says it might have been out of boredom, because for a time it was the only work he could do. During the past year, when he was sidelined again, Montana once more stepped up the weight work, but he feels he might have done too much.

"I found I was getting too confined," he says. "It's not like I was Joe Atlas—I was never that—but you start getting this muscle tone that doesn't allow your arm freedom of motion. You see those guys that are muscle-bound and can't scratch the middle of their neck? It's basically the same type of thing. I feel like my arm's not right. Even though I feel stronger, it's not right. You have to find that medium of real light work and take it that way."

Play-calling: Much of the 49ers offense

now is based on Montana taking only a three-step drop and getting rid of the ball quickly so his offensive line doesn't have to hold its blocks too long. "One of the things now is he really selectively decides how he's going to go deep with the ball," says longtime Montana watcher Fritz Shurmur, the Phoenix Cardinals defensive coordinator. "He used to take a shot at you a lot of different ways with the football up the field, but now it's the occasional play-action pass and quick slants that break for big ones. The older he's gotten the more he's become more of a surgeon, exploiting all of the little things that you give him."

Using more play-action and throwing quicker passes leaves Montana less exposed to a heavy pass rush. "It used to be they'd sit there and use a seven-step drop, and he'd hold the ball and go up the field," Shurmur says. No more. Now the 49ers depend on their outstanding wide receivers, Jerry Rice and John Taylor, to run with the ball after the catch.

The 49ers would like to see Montana protect himself in other ways, too, but he still reacts with the happy feet of his youth when he's stuck with the ball. In fact, his scrambling percentage has remained virtually unchanged through the years. The only time in his career he appeared to be skittish was in 1986, in the weeks immediately following his return from back surgery.

However, Randy Cross, who blocked for Montana as a guard and then center through the 1988 season, says Montana does a much better job of staying in the pocket now than he did in his early years. When Montana was younger, Cross says, the offensive linemen never knew where he

would be. Back then it rarely mattered, because Montana possessed enough agility to wriggle out of most situations, but now that he doesn't wriggle so much he's more likely to remain in the pocket.

Shurmur notes that one way Montana has always protected himself from pass-rushers is by having somewhere to throw the ball. "He's always got a place to go if what he's primarily after isn't there," Shurmur says. "He does a better job than anybody of getting the ball off."

"I don't see my game changing very much, at least I hope not," Montana says. "I think the guys who change their game a lot are usually those guys who have the big, strong arm, and as the years go on it fades. But I've never been one of those guys—I've been a

The presence of Young may be the source of Montana's fountain of youth.



OTTO ROSE/ALAMY

body and arm thrower—so I don't think I've really changed it that much.

"You rely on your past experiences for most parts of the game, anyway. It's 75% mental for a quarterback in most cases."

Walsh agrees. "You instinctively are telling yourself, 'Don't do this, don't do this, get rid of the ball now,'" he says. "Now, there have been some [quarterbacks] that had no mobility whatsoever, like Sonny Jurgensen and some of those guys who just stood back there and got rid of the ball. They wouldn't take a sack. John Brodie was that way. He was going to get rid of the ball no matter what; when he saw the time was coming, he threw the ball.

"Now, I haven't seen Joe do that, because I've seen Joe stand in there and take the punishment. But you as a quarterback have some control over your own destiny, and that's by getting rid of the ball quickly." Of Montana's two most recent serious injuries the broken finger could have been prevented had he dumped the ball off quickly. The other, the elbow, was simply from wear and tear, and it's not likely anything could have prevented that.

Montana certainly isn't sacrificing the offense to protect himself; he hasn't been throwing the ball away or settling for shorter gains. His combined completion percentage for his two most recent full seasons (70.2% in 1989 and 61.7% in '90) is higher than his career average, which already is a nifty 63.6%, and his average yards per attempt in 1989 (9.12) was by far the highest of his career. In 1990 it was 7.58, right about on his career average of 7.64. Montana will admit, however, that he occasionally rushes things. It all goes back to how long he has played and how automatic some of his instincts have become.

"There are times when I already know, once the ball's snapped and I see the defense, where I want to go with the ball," he says. "Sometimes I move a little too fast. I don't wait; I try to make things happen a little too quick.

"I can remember Mike [Holmgren, the former 49ers offensive coordinator] saying things of that nature—'Why'd you go here right away?'—and it's just that as soon as I saw the defense I knew that's where I wanted to go, and you do things like make a bad pass." That didn't happen when he was younger, Montana says, because he didn't know the offense or the defense as well, so he had more patience. Sometimes a little knowledge can be dangerous.

"As each year has passed, he's been that much more established in the offense itself

and in the system of football itself to where [looking to] the alternate receivers, as an example, becomes almost an instinctive, automatic move on his part, so there's been less and less reason to run," Walsh says. "He's always been able to find the right man in the right spot."

Walsh believes that if the 49ers offensive line, which improved greatly last season, can produce another good year, and if the running game is at least marginally effective, a healthy Montana can continue to play at the top of his game for some years more. Of course, nobody is predicting just how many more years that might be, least of all Montana. But he does know how he wants to leave: on his own terms.

"I'm hoping I'll know [when it's time]," he says. "You hear and you see things that guys don't want to retire, but I think that I'll know. This position's a little more easy to notice the differences in play. I think I'll notice it and then I'll have an easier time with it. It'll be hard, but I'm hoping that I'd be able to tell the difference in my play. While I'm doing it, no, but maybe while watching film I might be able to." Montana looks away, into the distance. "I might need to be told. I'm hoping I don't." ■

No one has to tell IRA MILLER anything about Montana; he was the one who told Joe in 1979 that if he'd just shave off the Fu Manchu he'd have a good shot at the big time.

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Living in A Shadow

The specter of Bill Parcells still darkens Ray Handley's image as the leader of the Giants

ONLY A WEEK EARLIER Ray Handley had suddenly succeeded Bill Parcells as the New York Giants coach, but as he supervised his first 1991 minicamp he was tossing a football to the running backs in a drill. He was still doing what he had done for seven years as a Giants assistant coach. "I don't think Ray knows he's the head coach," Ottis Anderson, the Giants' elderly running back, joked that day.

As the 1992 NFL season approaches, though, Handley knows he's the head coach. He knows it only too well after bearing the brunt of the blame for the Super Bowl XXV champions' ignominious skid to an 8-8 record. He's at a career crossroads—and nobody is joking.

Will Handley show he can grow into a quality coach? Or will he soon disappear, becoming just another deserving assistant coach who couldn't adjust to the demands of the big job? One way or another, those questions will be answered in this final season of his two-year contract.

"I'm much more at ease than I was at any point last year," Handley says as he sits in his Giants Stadium office. "Taking over like I did, I was scurrying around. I feel like I've got a handle on it now." His handle is that this will be "Ray Handley's team," that he's no longer a "caretaker" of Parcells' team.

The burly and balding Handley, who will be 48 on October 8, has a quick mind, a quick temper, and a quick smile. The former Stanford history major and record-setting running back has developed a reputation on the Giants staff as a brain. He's such a skilled card-counter he was banned at casino blackjack tables in Reno, and before the Giants offered him the head coaching job he was considering a career change after having been accepted at George Washington University Law School.

By DAVE ANDERSON

After the Giants' shaky season in 1991, signs in Giants Stadium parking lots implored, SEND HANDLEY TO LAW SCHOOL. By the end of the season Giants loyalists were wondering why general manager George Young had allowed Bill Belichick, the defensive coordinator under Parcells, to join the Cleveland Browns as head coach only four months before Parcells departed—especially when the Browns improved to become a playoff contender and the Giants declined toward mediocrity.

Even if Belichick had been on staff when Parcells left, though, the feeling around the Giants is that Young would have chosen Handley anyway. Young won't comment on that theory, saying only, "It's a decision we didn't have to make," but according to some Giants insiders, Young, just like many others around the Giants, never

considered Belichick commanding enough to be a head coach, thinking he was too introverted with the players and too secretive with the media. Handley, in contrast, seemed to be brighter, sharper. Handley was someone that Young, once a Baltimore high school history teacher, could relate to and work with.

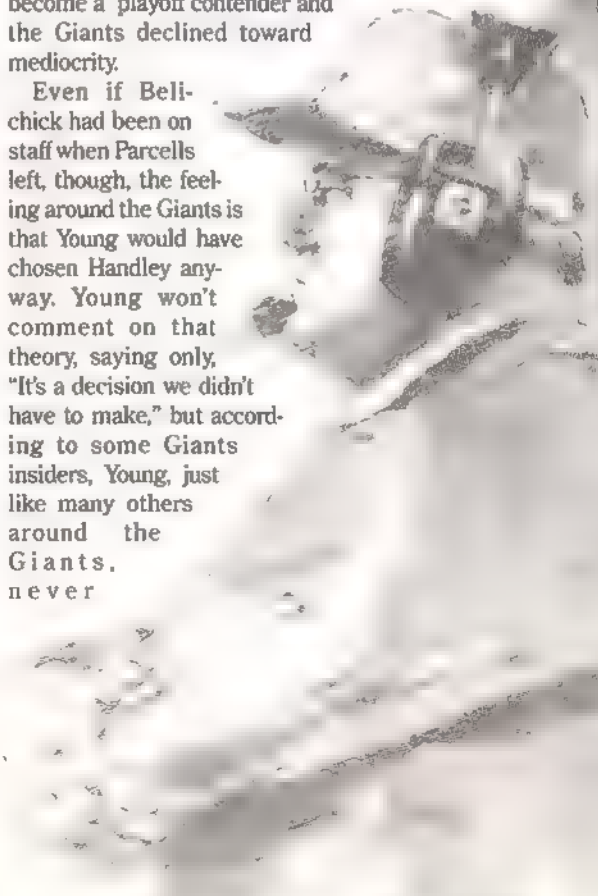
At any rate, Handley suddenly was a rookie NFL head coach who had never been head coach anywhere else except at a small Nevada high school. Instead of taking over a team that needed to be rebuilt or at least retooled, his burden was taking over a reigning Super Bowl champion only two months before training camp.

When he looks back on his first year, Handley doesn't regret the choices he made, no matter what his critics say. "It's easy to say I'd do things differently if I had the chance," he says, "but I'm not positive I would." Take that to mean that if he had it to do over he'd still name Jeff Hostetler his quarterback before the season opener instead of Phil Simms, a decision for which he's still being second-guessed. "I don't think the team was cognizant of all the factors that went into that decision," he says.

On the other hand, if the team wasn't aware of all the factors, shouldn't it have been? Handley talks now about how Simms wasn't completely recovered from his severely sprained suffered late in the 1990 season, but at the time of Hand-

ley's decision Simms had performed better than Hostetler in the exhibition games. If Simms wasn't completely healthy, why didn't Handley say so when he chose Hostetler to open the season? After Simms had thrown eight touchdown passes in the last five games (to Hostetler's five in the first 11 games), why did Handley still insist that Hostetler remained the No. 1 quarterback going into this year's training camp? "I think this year the team will accept Hostetler as a leader easier than it did a year ago," Handley says.

However, a big-



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ger question is, will the Giants accept Handley as their coach easier than they did after Parcells' sudden resignation? Not unless Handley puts more of his stamp on the team than he has on his office, which still has the look of a caretaker's furnished room, the look of someone who's passing through rather than someone who's planning to settle there for several years.

Parcells' office was cluttered with eight seasons of trophies, plaques, photos and mementoes, many from the former coach's two Super Bowl triumphs. Now that same office is mostly bare. Red and blue folders containing NFL team media guides dominate one long shelf. Small framed photos of Handley's family are on display. So is a game ball from the 16-14 victory over the San Francisco 49ers in last season's opener. If he had to leave in a hurry, Handley could

never emotional. You have to be yourself. I'm not going to be animated for the TV cameras."

However, if a coach wants to lead in the NFL, he must make his presence felt out there on the sideline during a game. If the Giants coach succeeds in creating Ray Handley's team, maybe he will stand out more. But what does he mean by "his team"?

"I mean a team that responds to me," he says, "not to some unwritten set of rules. The biggest problem last year was star status. Some of the defensive players felt they didn't have to concentrate in practice when the offensive team was preparing."

Translation: Lawrence Taylor didn't always practice hard. Under Parcells, the linebacker known as "LT" didn't always practice hard, either, but Parcells wasn't concerned. He knew Taylor would play hard on Sunday.

"But last year LT became more human," Handley says, alluding to a knee injury that contributed to the linebacker's first absence from the Pro Bowl squad in his 11 seasons. "You don't want your young players trying to emulate him in practice because they don't

was. No longer can the Giants depend on all those recovered fumbles and interceptions that turned so many big games. Handley knows he needs more points out of his offense in order to outscore opponents who will penetrate the defense.

"Our strengths on offense now," he says, "are our young offensive line and our young running backs." Parcells won Super Bowls with Anderson and Joe Morris running behind Maurice Carthon's blocking in a ball-control attack, but Rodney Hampton, who had 1,059 rushing yards last season, is now the featured back. Morris is long gone, and Carthon was released last spring. By the same token, Hostetler is Handley's quarterback even though many Giants players, especially Taylor, would prefer Simms.

"LT voiced his opinion on Simms to me a couple of times last year," the coach says. "When LT speaks, I listen—LT will always be able to have input with me—but I've got to make the decisions. I'm not anti-Phil Simms. If I didn't have full confidence in Jeff Hostetler I might have gone with Phil."

After losing three of his last four games last season, Handley knows he can't afford

"IT'S EASY TO SAY I'D DO THINGS
DIFFERENTLY IF I HAD THE CHANCE,
BUT I'M NOT POSITIVE I WOULD."

have the ability. I'll make more decisions this year on what I see. I think my decision will be more rational than they were last year when I knew it would be easier to try to maintain certain standards rather than try to change partway through."

Handley also is aware that as his own offensive coordinator last season he was often separated from the defensive unit. "The defense had a defense-oriented coach when Bill was here," he says. "Bill made the defense feel like special people, and the offense learned to live in a shadow. I always felt like the offense were second-class citizens. If the offense failed, the defense would cuss 'em. But with me being around the offense so much last year, the defense didn't feel like they were special people." Handley hired a new defensive coordinator, Rod Rust, and promoted Jim Fassel to offensive coordinator. "There was a Giants way to do things," Handley says, meaning a Parcells way. "It's different now."

With both Taylor (33) and Carl Banks (30 in August) aging at outside linebacker, the Giants defensive unit, which dominated its two Super Bowl teams, is no longer what it

another treadmill to another 8-8 season. However, making the playoffs won't be easy, not in the NFC East, pro football's toughest division. The Washington Redskins are the reigning Super Bowl champions, and the addition of Desmond Howard will only make them stronger. The young and hungry Dallas Cowboys are on the move after a playoff season. The Philadelphia Eagles should be Super Bowl contenders with a healthy Randall Cunningham returning to take the burden off their monster defense.

"You have to win at least five of your eight games in this division to have a shot at the playoffs," Handley said. "If you can get six, all the better." The Redskins were 6-2 in the NFC East last year; the Giants were 7-1 the previous year before winning Super Bowl XXV as the last Bill Parcells team. If Ray Handley's team doesn't emerge as a Super Bowl contender this season, it will be another coach's team in 1993. ■

Pulitzer Prize-winning sports writer DAVE ANDERSON's most recent book, *"In the Corner,"* will be released in paperback later this year.



'A coach can't get too emotional. I won't be animated for television.'

toss everything into a cardboard box on a moment's notice and hardly anybody would notice.

Even his players might not notice. When one of the Giants was asked to assess what Handley was like on the sideline last season, his answer was, "I don't even know he's there." The Giants always knew that the combative Parcells was there, just as players on other teams know that the methodical Joe Gibbs is there, that the demanding Don Shula is there, that the emotional Mike Ditka is there. However, don't expect Handley to change his sideline style.

"I believe a coach on the sideline can't get too emotional," he says. "Bill Walsh, Don Shula, Chuck Noll, Tom Landry—they were

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What's the Skinny on the Skins?

Our Hot Questions begin with a wakeup call for Washington's daydreams of another title

When the Washington Redskins walked off the field at the Metrodome in January, there wasn't much question that they were the best team in football. They stormed through the season at 14-2, outscored their opponents by an average of 16.3 points a game, won their NFC playoff games by 17 and 31 points, and won the Super Bowl by 13 points. No question: They were the best.

That was last season, though. Can the Redskins do it again? That's one of the questions that will be answered during the season—but we'll attempt to answer it now. In fact, there are plenty of hot questions as the NFL heads into the '92 season. Here are 20 of them:

1.

Repeating in the NFL is about as common as Jerry Glanville wearing something other than black. The Steelers doubled up twice in the 1970s. The 49ers did it once in the '80s. Can the Redskins do it in the '90s?

No. Joe Gibbs, the NFL's current genius, has an inconsistent record in his two previous post-Super Bowl championship years. In 1983, the season after Gibbs' first title, the Redskins came right back and went 14-2 before getting blown out by the Raiders in the Super Bowl; in 1988, the year after Doug Williams led Washington to a 42-10 demolition of Denver, the Skins were just 7-9 and didn't even make the playoffs.

What happens this year? The Redskins are pretty much a team without huge egos, one that reflects its level-headed coach.

Born to run: Count on Cunningham to be back at full speed in Philadelphia.

By GARY MYERS

However, even with the spark that rookie Desmond Howard is likely to give them, don't look for the Skins to get back to the Super Bowl this year. It's just a fact of NFL life that mediocre teams get up to play the Super Bowl champ and the Super Bowl champ doesn't get up to play the mediocre teams. It's called complacency. It comes after an offseason of everybody telling you how great you are. Winning the NFC East will be tough enough for the Redskins.

2.

Will Randall Cunningham come back scrambling?

How many times did people say Cunningham would get hurt because he ran too much? Well, he tore up his knee in the first game last season when he took a shot in the pocket. Take away Cunningham's creativity, make him a pocket passer, and lose him for the season.

Cunningham will be back this season—and yes, he'll be scrambling. It's just the way he plays. However, we won't know what that knee injury has done to Cunningham's

speed and mobility until somebody like Lawrence Taylor tries to chase him down in the open field.

3.

Can Joe Montana be Joe Montana again?

The 49ers must think so. They tried hard to deal Steve Young before the draft in April, so they must feel pretty confident that Joe Cool can make it back all the way following the elbow surgery that wiped out his 1991 season. Montana was throwing well in the offseason but has not played in a game that counts since the 1990 NFC Championship Game.

The 49ers never would have been willing to deal Young—and they still could do it—without positive reports on Montana. Steve Bono played well last year after Young injured his knee, but it would be too risky to go into camp with him one heartbeat away as the only experienced back-up if Montana were having problems. Don't forget that Montana is 36 years old, a very fragile age for quarterbacks—but while we're at it, let's also not forget that he played two months after back surgery in 1986. The man is nothing if not resilient.

4.

Are the Bills a damaged team after back-to-back Super Bowl flops?

You bet. Give Marv Levy lots of credit for getting Buffalo back to the big game last year after that crushing Scott Norwood miss against the Giants the year before. The Bills were able to use that 20-19 loss as the push to get them back, ostensibly to take care of unfinished business. They got back—and they got undressed by Washington.

Although the Bills are still good enough to win the AFC East (but watch out for the Jets), it's hard to imagine them not having a huge letdown. They worked hard to return to the Super Bowl and were embarrassed. What's the motivation this year? We don't see any. Bye-bye, Bills.





After two Super Bowl losses—one crushing, both heart-breaking—the Bills won't be back to the Big Dance.

5.

The Colts had the most premium picks. Who had the best drafts?

Even though we're talking about Indianapolis, it's hard to blow it when you're picking No. 1 and No. 2. Other than the fact that they vastly overpaid with contracts totalling almost \$18 million, the Colts picked the right players: Steve Emtman and Quentin Coryatt, who should be the foundation of a pretty good defense, along with cornerback Ashley Ambrose, taken in the second round. Here are the next best drafts:

2. Bengals. They're going nowhere this year or next, so it made sense to grab their quarterback of the future in David Klingler, despite the offense's moans that it wanted defense. Cincy also picked up a second No. 1 in the move down with Washington and grabbed safety Darryl Williams. Although the Bengals didn't need another receiver, everybody wanted Carl Pickens at the top of the second round.

3. Falcons. They jumped all over the board in the first round but wound up with tackle Bob Whitfield and running back Tony Smith. This will be a fun team to watch.

4. Cowboys. Jimmy Johnson must have made the people keeping track of the draft dizzy on draft day. He made more deals than Monty Hall and came away with a starting corner in Kevin Smith, a starting middle linebacker in Robert Jones, and a second-round receiver in Jimmy Smith, whom many teams had rated near the top of the board.

6.

What team is ready to make a Super Bowl run?

The trendy pick would be Dallas. The Cowboys won 11 games last year, had all those picks in the draft, and have Troy Aikman, one of the best quarterbacks in the biz, with plenty of ammunition in Michael Irvin, Emmitt Smith, and Jay Novacek. Before we anoint the Cowboys the team of the '90s, though, let's take a quick timeout to tell you that they might not even be the best team in their division. The Eagles are the team to beat in the NFC this year.

Two reasons: For one, Randall Cunningham is back. Philly won 10 games without him last year, and you've got to figure Cunningham is at least two games better than

Jim McMahon, Brad Goebel, and Jeff Kemp. The other reason is simple: defense. The Eagles just don't give up any points—only 15.3 a game last year—and Reggie White is in the last year of his contract, perfect timing with some sort of free agency looming. You know the Minister of Defense will be inspired in a dash for the cash.

7.

Who made the best draft-day move?

This is a two-parter. Last year Redskins general manager Charley Casserly traded his No. 2 in the '91 draft and No. 5 in the '92 draft for San Diego's No. 1 in '92, which turned out to be the sixth pick overall. Thank you, Bobby Beathard. The player the Redskins wanted: Desmond Howard. The problem: They were led to believe the Packers would take him at No. 5.

The solution: Jump over them. Casserly dealt his second No. 1, the last pick in the first round, and exchanged other goodies with the Bengals to move up two spots. The result: The highest pick ever for a Super Bowl champ and the first time the champ ever drafted the Heisman winner. Maybe the Packers would have taken Terrell Buck-

ley anyway, but Casserly had some extra ammunition and he used it to get the player he wanted. He's quickly becoming one of the shrewdest GMs in the NFL.

8.

Did the Cowboys get a bonus No. 1 pick with Chad Hennings?

Yep. Hennings was an elite defensive lineman at Air Force in the late '80s, and the previous Cowboys regime under Tex Schramm had some success in the '60s picking futures from the military academies. You might remember a Navy quarterback named Roger Staubach, who was taken in the 10th round in 1964. The Cowboys waited for him to show up in 1969, and it was worth the wait.

Hennings' five- to eight-year commitment was shortened due to defense budget cutbacks, and he's scheduled to be in training camp this summer. The 6'6", 272-pound Hennings worked out for Dallas the day before the draft and ran a 4.8 for the 40. Of course, he hasn't played football since 1987, so there's no telling what will happen when he puts the pads on, but he had enough ability at Air Force that he would have been a very high draft choice if he had been able to play right away.

9.

Will the NFL miss instant replay?

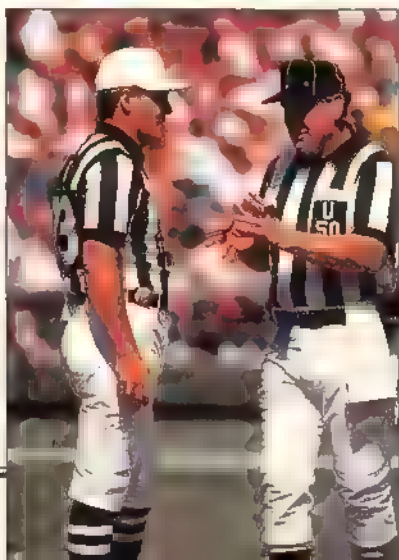
C'mon, ask a serious question. Last year replay reversed 90 plays, but after further review the NFL said nine of those decisions were wrong. Twelve more calls that should have been reversed were not. Instant replay wasn't worth the aggravation for only an 80% success rate. The officials on the field do better than that. Replay slowed down the game and created more confusion than it solved—and it was a waste of time.

10.

That much said, why didn't instant replay work?

It was too inconsistent. For every correct reversal, such as the Art Monk touch-down that was disallowed in the Super Bowl, there were just too many times when

The second-guessing has ended—now it's up to the zebras.



we heard "the whistle had blown" or "inconclusive evidence" after the game had already been delayed four minutes.

It seemed like a good idea at the outset—why not correct calls if the technology was there?—but instead of getting better the system got worse. You never got the feeling that the on-field officials and replay officials were working together.

The pro-replay people might have gotten a little cocky. They believed that once replay was in it would never leave because the fans wouldn't buy the concept of not correcting calls after there had been a mechanism to do so. We'll find out this season about the public backlash.

11.

Should the Raiders have traded for Phil Simms?

Yes. The Giants never wanted to deal Simms, but out of deference to his loyalty they were willing to let him go if he would bring back a No. 2 or No. 3 draft pick. The Raiders were the perfect team. Jay Schroeder is Jay Schroeder, and who knows what to make of Todd Marinovich at this point in his career. Although Simms will be 37 this season, he's good for another year or two, at least.

Plus, consider how Al Davis is loading up for a Super Bowl run. He signed Ronnie Lott last year and traded for Eric Dickerson this year. He has all the parts in place for a short-term push, which is all anybody can ask in the NFL. Simms would have been perfect. Proof: In the Giants' last game of the season, a meaningless game for them and a game with playoff implications for Houston, he completed 15 of 17 passes. Davis should have pulled the trigger on this deal.

12.

What coach ought to look into a month-to-month lease?

Let's answer this question with a question: Just how much turnover can there be after last year? It seemed that everybody on the bubble either quit or was fired. Anyway, the shakiest coach going into the '92 season has to be Ray Handley of the Giants. Fans in New York were ready to take up a collection last season to send him to law school. GM George Young has



The silver and black would have looked good on the true-blue Simms.

been unwavering in his defense of Handley, who was handed the defending Super Bowl champs when Bill Parcells quit and took them to a stormy 8-8 season, but Handley is facing increasing pressure from fans and the media, and needs to win big with a team on the decline.

He's sticking with Jeff Hostetler, he's reworked the coaching staff, and he promises that this will be more of a Ray Handley team. Giants fans don't have much patience, though, and the heat will be on from day one.

13.

Will the AFC ever win another Super Bowl?

Not in the foreseeable future. For those scoring at home, the Redskins' 38-17 victory over the Bills in SB XXVI made it eight straight for the NFC. The AFC has been outscored 298-118 in those games (an average demolition of 37-15) and has not scored more than 20 points in any of them.

The most curious aspect is that the AFC was supposed to be the conference of quarterbacks. Back in that great QB draft of '83, when six of them went in the first round, every one was taken by an AFC team. Of those six, John Elway, Jim Kelly, Dan Marino, and Tony Eason guided their teams to a total of six Super Bowls—and six Super Bowl losses. The NFC teams simply have played better defense and run the ball better, and any coach will tell you those are the two ingredients needed to wear the big ring.

14.

Can Sam Wyche make it in Tampa Bay?

You might be surprised. The Buccaneers



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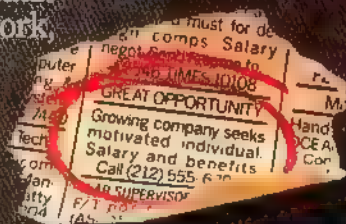
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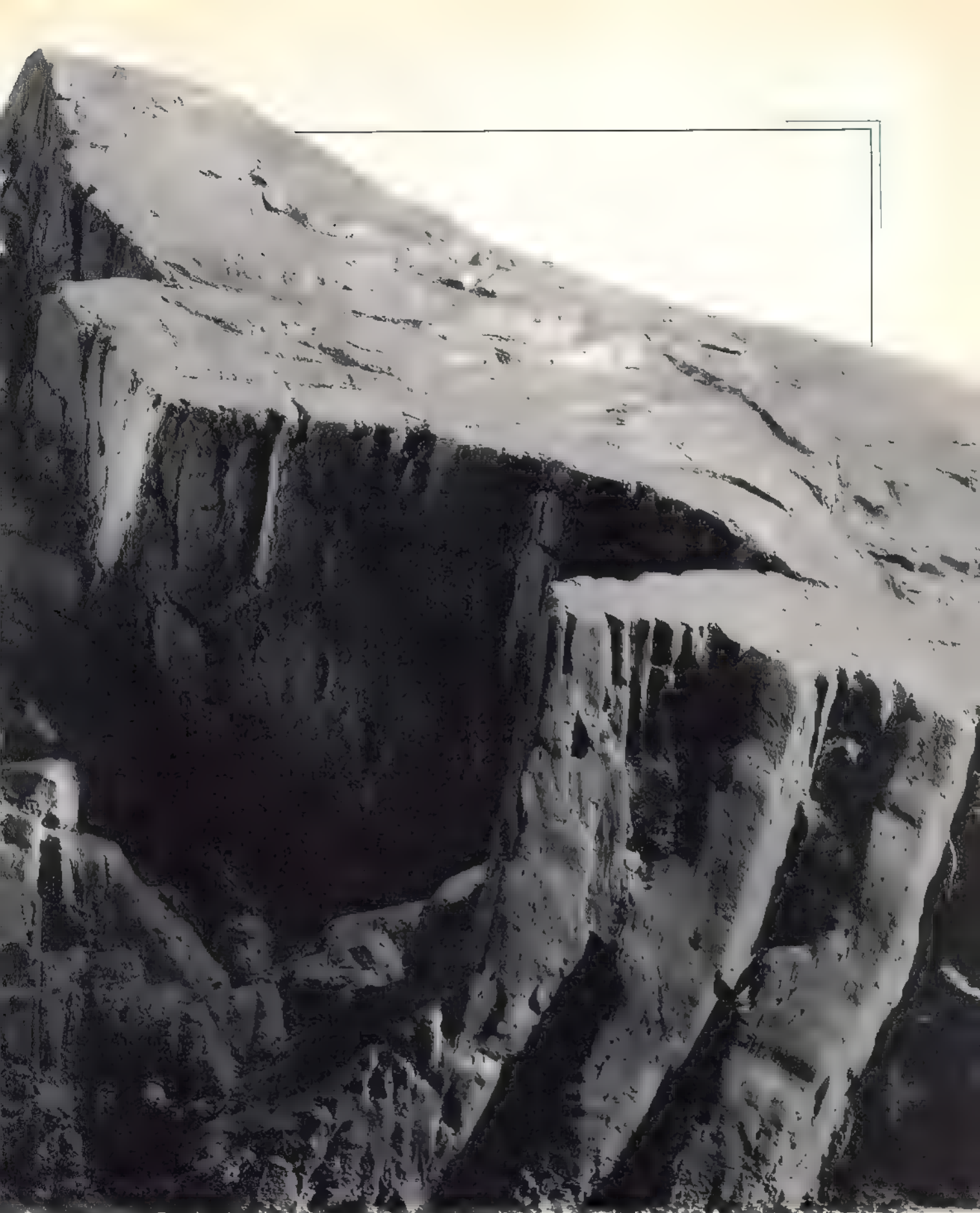


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have a pretty amazing streak going: nine straight years of at least 10 losses. However, if owner Hugh Culverhouse supports him and the Bucs don't make any panic moves, Wyche can turn this thing around. His constant battles with Commissioner Paul Tagliabue and his crusade against women in the locker room have camouflaged the fact that Wyche has a creative offensive mind and that his players like playing for him.

Of course, trying to win with Tampa Bay has swallowed up a lot of coaches. It's just one of those franchises that can't put it together. Wyche inherited the results of an awful trade made by Ray Perkins early in the 1990 season, when he sent the Colts his 1992 No. 1 pick for quarterback Chris Chandler. Perkins was fired about three months

later, and Chandler was cut a year after that. When the Bucs finished 3-13 under Richard Williamson, that No. 1 pick would have been No. 2 overall. That's not Wyche's fault, but it still hurts.

15.

What rookies will make the most immediate impact?

Steve Emtman and Quentin Coryatt will have

the chance for big-time playing time because they play for the Colts, and the Colts stink. A couple of cornerbacks, Terrell Buckley in Green Bay and Troy Vincent in Miami, should start right away. Same for defensive end Sean Gilbert of the Rams, a team that hasn't had a dominant pass-rusher since Deacon Jones.

The sleeper for a big rookie year is Jets tight end Johnny Mitchell. Bruce Coslet wants to get the tight end involved in the Jets passing game, and Mitchell is an acrobatic if inexperienced receiver. He could have nearly the same impact as Keith Jackson did in Philadelphia a few years ago.

16.

Will there be a draft in 1993?

Yes. Imagine the chaos if next year's draftee is told, "Son, this is America, so sell your services to highest bidder—and don't

trip over your wallet on your way into the auto showroom." No draft would mean total bedlam. Don't count on that to happen.

However, since the 10-year agreement between the NFL and the union expired in April, there most likely will be some changes made, either through a settlement of the antitrust suit, a league-reworked draft that would be more palatable to the courts, or a lawsuit filed by a draft-eligible player. The league might reduce the number of rounds, which would create more free agents, but it would still prohibit the top picks from talking to more than one team.

17.

Eric Dickerson was a pain for the Rams. He was a pain for the Colts. Will he be a pain for the Raiders?

No way. He's a perfect Raider, a perfect Al Davis pickup. Davis loves to collect the big-name problem cases and resurrect careers, and Dickerson obviously wanted to be a Raider. He gave up about \$500,000 of his \$2.2 million salary. When Dickerson is happy and motivated, he's still one of the top backs in the NFL. In 1985 he ran the Rams into the NFC title game with not much help from quarterback Dieter Brock. In '87, his first year with the Colts, he helped them win the AFC East.

When was the last time you heard of an unhappy Raider? Dickerson was a steal for a fourth- and eighth-round pick. He's happy, he's back in L.A., and he has something to prove.

18.

Is Kansas City tailor-made for the Super Bowl?

No. The Chiefs are the closest thing the AFC has to an NFC team—they can run the ball forever with Barry Word, Christian Okoye, and Harvey Williams, and Derrick Thomas is the marquee name in a very solid defense—but the Chiefs have no shot at the Super Bowl unless Plan B acquisition Dave Krieg elevates his



Look for Eric the Pain to make big gains in Los Angeles.

game to a level he never showed at Seattle. Krieg has played well against the Chiefs, which might have influenced K.C. to sign him, but he's always been the epitome of a hot-and-cold quarterback. In effect, the Chiefs traded Steve DeBerg (whom they let go in Plan B to Tampa Bay) for Krieg, and that seems like a wash.

GM Carl Peterson flirted with moving up in the draft for a shot at David Klingler, but nothing happened. Then he passed over Tommy Maddox in the first round. Finally, he took Virginia's Matt Blundin in the second round. Blundin's the quarterback of the future in Kansas City, but Krieg is it for now. With a team otherwise good enough to get to the Super Bowl, Peterson and coach Marty Schottenheimer must hope Krieg holds up his end.

19.

Besides putting the old AFL on the map with Joe Namath's victory in Super Bowl III over Baltimore, what other distinction have the New York Jets earned?

This is tough to believe, but Jets are the only NFL team not to win a division title since the 1970 merger—and that includes the Buccaneers and the Seahawks, who weren't born until 1976. The Jets have that



Will Buckley's plentiful pickoffs pick up the Pack?



The Eagles' dominant defense makes them the team to beat in the NFC—and you're welcome to try.

dubious honor to themselves after the Oilers and the Saints won division titles last season. The last time the Jets won a division was 1969, the year after their Super Bowl and the final year of the AFL.

When will the streak end? Well, if the Bills take a big step back this season the Jets are the one team in the AFC East capable of taking a big step forward. It all depends on how quickly quarterback Browning Nagle develops.

20.

Which of the nine new coaches has the best chance to win right away?

Let's face it: None of these jobs would have opened up if the teams in question were ready-made for a playoff run. The teams that should have been drafting one through six in April all have new coaches.

Minnesota's Dennis Green is the only one taking over a team that didn't finish with a losing record last year. The Vikings were 8-8, but with their lack of draft choices, things could get worse before they get better.

San Diego's Bobby Ross may have walked into the best situation—if he can settle the quarterback situation. The Chargers have a solid defense and were on the verge of a breakthrough the last few years under Dan Henning. As long as general manager Bobby Beathard doesn't trade away any more No.1 picks that turn out to be sixth overall, the Chargers could be in the playoffs fairly soon.

Pittsburgh's Bill Cowher also is in a quick turnaround situation. The Steelers' biggest problem the last two years has been finding consistency at quarterback between Bubby Brister and Neil O'Donnell, but they're always competitive in the AFC Central.

The Colts certainly are loading up on young talent, thanks to the one-two draft punch of Steve Emtman and Quentin Coryatt. Ted Marchibroda will install the no-huddle offense and hope it does for Jeff George what it did for Jim Kelly in Buffalo. The Colts probably won't win more than five games this season. In this age of parity, Marchibroda needs maybe one or two more solid drafts before the Colts could challenge for a playoff spot.

And our darkhorse coach to have some success in the near future is Sam Wyche in Tampa. The Buccaneers have a decade's worth of losing tradition, but Wyche has a way with quarterbacks and he has the ultimate challenge in Vinny Testaverde. When Wyche puts aside those personal crusades against the league establishment, what you have is a pretty good coach. ■

Check out the answer man: Senior writer GARY MYERS, whose draft preview ran in May, once again will be appearing on HBO's weekly show, "Inside the NFL."

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When Chuck Knox Moves, Others Follow

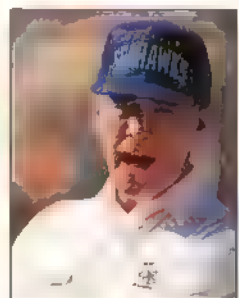
Our Ratings & Inside Stuff shows—among other things—how the Rams coach is a trendsetter

IT'S NO LONGER TRUE THAT YOU need a program to identify just the players. When the NFL opens its 73rd season, fans will need special introductions to the new coaches as well. Nine teams begin 1992 with coaches different than the ones that started last season, and the youth movement is on. New coaches mean new assistants and new systems, which means a long summer of learning throughout the NFL.

Some things never change, though. Quarterbacks will be on the hot seat, and some veterans will be in danger of losing their jobs. Meanwhile, Jerry Rice and Barry Sanders will continue to make certain fantasy football aficionados very happy. Let the games begin.

Continental Shift

When Chuck Knox changes coaching jobs, you can bet it will be a volatile year for the entire NFL. The three most topsy-turvy years for head coaches since 1977 have come when Knox was switching cities. Between 1977 and '78, when he went from the Rams to the Bills, there were nine other coaching changes, the most in any year since the NFL-AFL merger. Five years later Knox left Buffalo for Seattle—and seven other teams made changes. This year nine clubs



As goes Knox's job security, so goes that of the rest of the NFL's coaches.

By HOWARD BALZER

will begin the season with a new head coach . . . and there's Knox heading back to the Rams.

Coaching Futility

The Atlanta Falcons have gained respectability under coach Jerry Glaville, but they still share an inglorious "honor" with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. The five coaches in NFL history with the worst winning percentage (in at least 100 games) each worked at one point for either the Bucs or the Falcons.

Age and the AFC

Houston's Jack Pardee is easily the oldest coach in the AFC Central at 56. Pittsburgh's Bill Belichick is 40, and both Cincinnati's David Shula and Pittsburgh's Bill Cowher have yet to reach 35. By comparison, the AFC East is like an old geezers' home.

Buffalo's Marv Levy hit 64 in August, Miami's Don Shula was 62 in January, and New England's Dick MacPherson will be 62 in November. Ted Marchibroda of Indianapolis hit 61 in March. Then there's youngster Bruce Coslet of the Jets, who turned 46 in August.

Holding Will Be Legal

Pro athletes often are criticized for not planning for life after sports, but Atlanta Falcons guard Bill Fralic and Buffalo Bills guard Mitch Frerotte appear ready.

Fralic spent some time in the offseason working as a broadcaster for telecasts of World Championship Wrestling and says he is considering a career as a wrestler. Ditto for Frerotte. "It's what I want to do," he says. "I'm young and I'm athletic, so I might as well use my athletic ability when I get done instead of going to sit behind a desk."

Before the 1991 season Frerotte asked Bills media relations director Scott Berchtold to list house cleaning as his hobby. When Berchtold said he wouldn't do it, Frerotte persuaded him by saying, "Put house cleaning in there or I'm going to rip your face off." Guess what? It's in there.

Quarterbacks With Question Marks

What was Cincinnati thinking when it selected David Klingler in the first round of

Charting Coaching Turnover

Team	1977	1978
Buffalo	Jim Ringo	Chuck Knox
Cleveland	Forrest Gregg	Sam Rutigliano
Kansas City	Paul Wiggin	Marv Levy
Chicago	Jack Pardee	Neill Armstrong
Detroit	Tommy Hudspeth	Monte Clark
L.A. Rams	Chuck Knox	Ray Malavasi
New Orleans	Hank Stram	Dick Nolan
St. Louis	Don Coryell	Bud Wilkinson
San Francisco	Ken Meyer	Pete McCulley
Washington	George Allen	Jack Pardee
Team	1982	1983
Buffalo	Chuck Knox	Kay Stephenson
Kansas City	Marv Levy	John Mackovic
N.Y. Jets	Walt Michaels	Joe Walton
Seattle	Mike McCormack	Chuck Knox
Atlanta	Leeman Bennett	Dan Henning
L.A. Rams	Ray Malavasi	John Robinson
N.Y. Giants	Ray Perkins	Bill Parcells
Philadelphia	Dick Vermeil	Marion Campbell
Team	1991	1992
Cincinnati	Sam Wyche	David Shula
Indianapolis	Ron Meyer	Ted Marchibroda
Pittsburgh	Chuck Noll	Bill Cowher
San Diego	Dan Henning	Bobby Ross
Seattle	Chuck Knox	Tom Flores
Green Bay	Lindy Infante	Mike Holmgren
L.A. Rams	John Robinson	Chuck Knox
Minnesota	Jerry Burns	Dennis Green
Tampa Bay	Richard Williamson	Sam Wyche

Coach	Team(s)	Career record (Pct.)
Marion Campbell	Falcons, Eagles	34-80-1 (.300)
John McKay	Buccaneers	45-91-1 (.332)
Dan Henning	Falcons/Chargers	38-73-1 (.343)
Ray Perkins	Giants/Buccaneers	43-76-0 (.361)
Norm Van Brocklin	Falcons/Vikings	66-100-7 (.401)

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the draft? Where is Tampa Bay headed with the Plan B signing of Steve DeBerg and the drafting of Craig Erickson? And although John Elway and Denver coach Dan Reeves never have seen eye-to-eye, did Reeves go too far by taking Tommy Maddox in the first round? Those decisions and others could make this a season of intrigue among NFL signal-callers.

Boomer Esiason, Bengals. Was new coach David Shula sending Esiason a message when Klingler was selected with the sixth overall choice in the draft? It seems likely. After all, Shula didn't exactly give Esiason a ringing endorsement the month before the draft when he said Esiason needed to "work physically on the details of throwing and making it easier to catch the ball." Asked to elaborate, he added: "He needs to learn—well, he already knows it—but he needs to do more on touching up the ball, to make some of his passes a little softer. Also, to put the ball to the receiver a little better right out of the break." Shula also noted that the 31-year-old Esiason is "at the stage of his career where you've got to really work hard in the offseason."



Boomer has struggled since '89, and now he's feeling some heavy heat.

Vinny Testaverde, Buccaneers. The circle is complete, and the heat is on to see whether Testaverde ever can understand how to operate an NFL offense. If he can't do it under Sam Wyche, his case is hopeless. And DeBerg is back as the back-up—at least for now. Says Testaverde philosophically: "Steve went to San Francisco. He left, and Joe Montana became a great quarterback. He went to Denver. He left, and John Elway became a great quarterback. Then he came here. He left, and I haven't become a great quarterback. Now he's back. We're starting over, I guess."



In drafting Klingler, Cincy hopes the former Cougar can mature into a Bengal.

John Elway, Broncos. He must really be upset with longtime friend Gary Kubiak, who retired after the 1991 season. Kubiak never rocked the boat and always accepted his role as Elway's caddy, but now those days are over. Maddox won't be ready to play right away, but the message was there when the Broncos surprised many observers by snatching him in the first round.

Randall Cunningham, Eagles. Injured in the first game of the 1991 season, Cunningham could only observe as Jim McMahon nearly led the Eagles to the playoffs. Cunningham said he learned from watching McMahon. Then on draft day, the Eagles selected Casey Weldon on the fourth round. He's got promise, but for now he'll watch and learn, too. (Meanwhile, here's what McMahon was saying in the offseason about Cunningham: "He's a great player, but I'm a better quarterback.")

Timm Rosenbach, Cardinals. Only the Cardinals would lose the only quarterback on the roster who could throw the ball in preseason and then trade a first-round pick to the Dolphins for wide receiver Randal Hill. There's still no one to get Hill the ball, especially if Rosenbach isn't fully recovered from his serious knee injury. Oh, we almost forgot—the Cardinals drafted Tony Sacca in the second round. Joe Bugel, you might start circulating those résumés.

Joe Montana, 49ers. Is he or isn't he? That is the question. Steve Young is wondering. So is Steve Bono. Still, no one has commented on whether Montana's elbow injury had anything to do with those 2,500 autographs he signed for Upper Deck football cards. Just wondering.

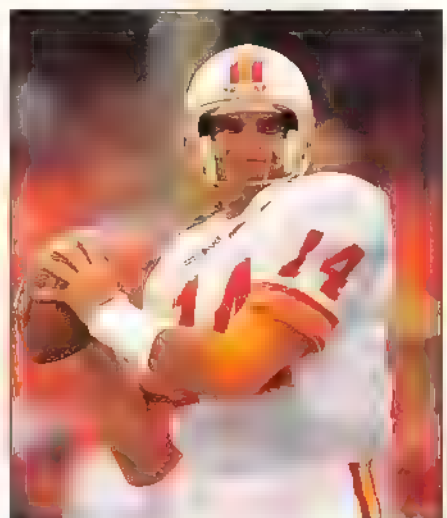
Todd Marinovich, Raiders. Amid stories he had failed a drug test following the Raiders' playoff loss to Kansas City, Marinovich just worked to get better. In the off

season he was at the club's practice facility every weekday by 8 a.m., throwing to teammates and working with assistant coach Mike White on footwork, mechanics, the playbook, and film study. He denies the drug stories and says he'll be ready to start the opener.

That Losing Feeling

By the end of January, 47 players and a group of coaches will have the singular experience of losing the Super Bowl. Buffalo has had the sinking feeling two consecutive years, and according to those who know, it's awful, even when you've won before.

ESPN analyst Joe Theismann remembers going to the Pro Bowl after the Redskins won the 1983 Super Bowl over Miami. At one point, he was talking with a Dolphins player and asked him what it was like to lose. "He said, 'It hurt so much it made us



If Testaverde flops again, Tampa Bay will make him walk the plank.

wish we didn't even get there," Theismann says. "I found out what he meant the next year."

The Redskins were crushed by the Raiders in the next Super Bowl, and no previous victory could assuage the hurt. "You're so focused on it, and you're there, on the verge of something great: consecutive Super Bowl wins," he says. "And then you lose, and it's just devastating."

Washington coach Joe Gibbs recalls the plane ride home after that loss to the Raiders. "That was awful," Gibbs says. "I remember sitting on that plane and wondering how that could happen. I was surprised I'd feel that way, because we had gotten to the Super Bowl, but it was awful. It would be hard to feel lower. It stays with you and stays with you. You remember how many people in the area you let down, and for weeks you wonder what you could have done differ-

ently." He hasn't experienced that losing feeling again.

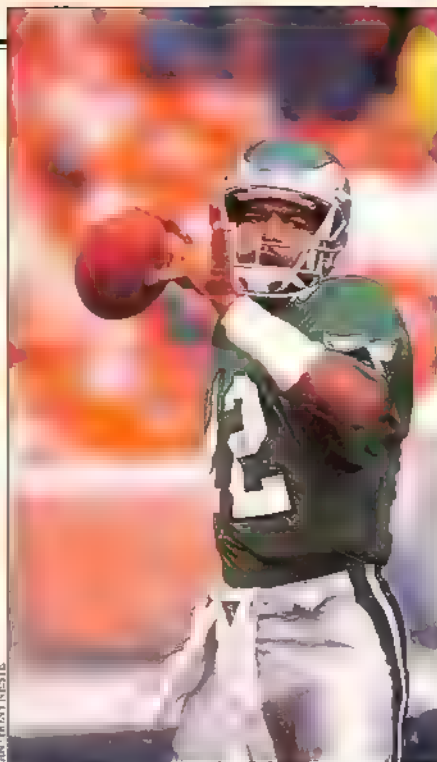
From the Cockpit to the Pits

As the Dallas Cowboys have shown steady improvement under the regime of Jerry Jones and Jimmy Johnson, the Tom Landry/Tex Schramm era is fading quickly from view. However, it's very possible Johnson and Co. will be thanking the previous administration for a pick Schramm made almost as an afterthought in the 1988 draft.

In the 11th round that year the Cowboys selected defensive lineman Chad Hennings, the 1987 Outland Trophy winner. The catch was that Hennings played at the Air Force Academy and had to fulfill an eight-year military commitment. However, because of recent military spending cutbacks, the Air Force has offered graduates an early release. Hennings has started the paperwork and is expected to report to training camp in July. He might be available for some pre-camp work in June.

"This is a dream come true for me," says Hennings, who has been stationed in London the last two years flying A-10 bombers. "It has been a long time coming since I basically fell off the face of the earth four years ago, but I've had an interesting career. How many people can say they've been a fighter pilot and a prospective NFL player too?"

Hennings turned some heads at a workout for the Cowboys the day before this



ANTHONY NESTÉ

The Eagles missed Cunningham but didn't crumble when his knee did.

year's draft. He is 6'6" and weighs in at a rock-hard 272 pounds, 21 more than his last year in college. That season he set an Air Force record with 24 sacks. At the Cowboys workout he bench-pressed 450 pounds—20 more than in '87—and in his first 40-yard dash in four years ran a 4.8.

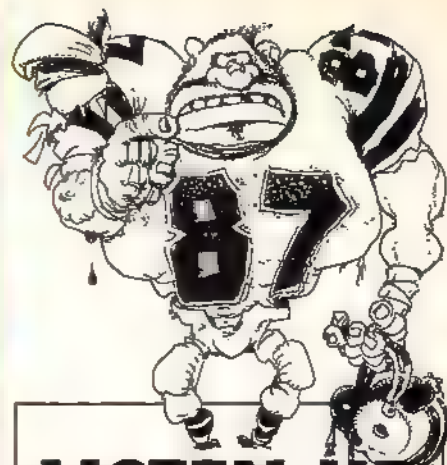
"He's in tremendous condition," Johnson says. "He could step in right now and be one of the strongest players on our football team." One Cowboys assistant coach adds, "If he was coming out in this draft he'd be a top 10 pick."

Hennings was a defensive tackle at Air Force, but the Cowboys will first try him at end. "I've had basically a four-year sabbatical," Hennings says. "I've had the opportunity to mature a lot and gain some size and strength, so I see no problem with the physical aspect of the game. As far as the mental aspect, it's like riding a bike. Once you've done it, you can do it again."

"I've spent many a night before I went to



A single defensive back has no chance to throw Rice.



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Top 10 in Anyone's Draft

1. Jerry Rice, WR, 49ers. Whether the quarterback is Joe Montana or Steve Young or Steve Bono, Rice will find a way to get his touchdowns. He's as consistent as any player in football, finding the endzone 14 times in 1991.

2. Barry Sanders, RB, Lions. Whatever Detroit's offensive style—and the Lions are moving closer to the Redskins' style of offense—Sanders will always be the key component. He scored 17 touchdowns last season, one as a receiver.

3. Thurman Thomas, RB, Bills. The best all-purpose back in the game, he'll flourish no matter what offense Buffalo runs. The Bills plan to stay with the no-huddle despite the departure of Ted Marchibroda to the Colts. Thomas' 12 touchdowns last season included five as a pass catcher.

4. Emmitt Smith, RB, Cowboys. He didn't get the headlines the way Sanders and Thomas did, but he may be better than both. Smith is the backbone of Dallas' offense. He scored 13 touchdowns last season, one as a receiver.

5. Jim Kelly, QB, Bills. There's no evidence that he won't duplicate his league-high 33 touchdown passes of last season. He spreads the ball around to receivers and running backs, and the no-huddle offense makes him doubly dangerous.

When he finds his helmet, Thomas is the AFC's most dangerous performer.

6. Warren Moon, QB, Oilers. This pick might be a problem. You have to figure Moon will toss his share of touchdown passes, but with wide receiver Drew Hill departed in Plan B, the question is whether the other receivers will get open as consistently.

7. Dan Marino, QB, Dolphins. Even in a down year, you know Marino will throw anywhere from 22 to 28 touchdown passes. He shows no signs of slowing down.

8. Andre Rison, WR, Falcons. No flash in the pan, he has a knack for making big plays. Rison rang up a dozen touchdowns in the Falcons' "red gun" offense.

9. Rodney Hampton, RB, Giants. Hampton has become the Giants' workhorse. He scored 10 touchdowns last season and should be good for that every season for awhile.

10. Chip Lohmiller, K, Redskins. The only kicker worth investing a relatively high pick on. Not only is Lohmiller an excellent kicker, but the Redskins score a lot—which gives him a lot of chances.

Can They Match This?

Players who make you wonder whether 1991 was a fluke or the start of something big:

Chris Miller, QB, Falcons. He's always been on the verge and put it together last season with 26 touchdown passes.

Brad Baxter, FB, Jets. He doesn't get many yards (only 666 in 1991) but scored 11 touchdowns.

Leroy Hoard, RB, Bengals. Hoard followed his disappointing rookie season with 11 touchdowns last year, but the Browns keep bringing in more backs.

Michael Haynes, WR, Falcons. A classic speed merchant, Haynes scored 11 touchdowns in 1991. However, his fortunes depend on Chris Miller.

Vince Workman, RB, Packers. The talk is that new Packers coach Mike Holmgren likes Workman and his 11 touchdowns. Watch for more surprises.

Robert Delpino, RB, Rams. Delpino will never be a featured back, but he always seems to be around the endzone. He scored 10 touchdowns last season.

Top Five Kickers

1. Chip Lohmiller, Redskins. Lohmiller, who has excellent range, didn't miss an extra point in 56 tries last season and made 31 field goals, tying Pete Stoyanovich for most in the league.

2. Pete Stoyanovich, Dolphins. The deadly accurate Dolphin made 31 of 37 field goal attempts last season—and he can make them from long distance. Stoyanovich performed well despite missing Miami's

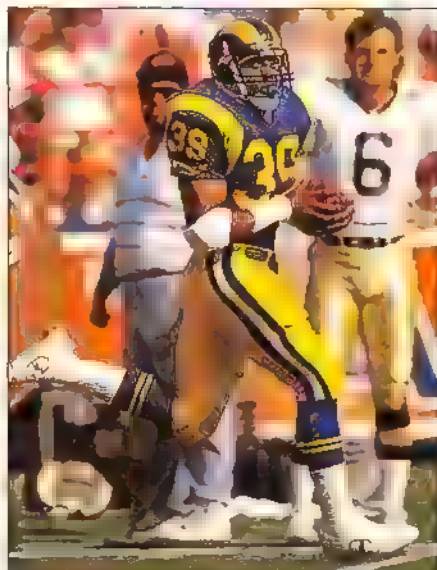


Sanders' scoring reflects his spot at the center of Detroit's world.

first two games because of a contract dispute.

3. Morten Andersen, Saints. The Great Dane hasn't been as rock-solid as he was a few years ago, but he's still one of the league's best—especially with at least nine games played indoors.

4. Tony Zendejas, Rams. How Houston ever could have left him unprotected is hard to imagine. Zendejas didn't miss a field goal last season, but he tried only 17 because of the Rams' woeful offense. If L.A. rebounds he'll have an even better year this season.



Delpino is no burner in the open field, but he has a nose for the endzone.

5. Nick Lowery, Chiefs. Another old reliable, Lowery made 83% of his field goals last year—and some claimed he had an off year in 1991. Yes, we are spoiled.

Defenses Most Likely to Score

1. Atlanta. The Falcons play an aggressive defense that can give up big plays but also make them. They had five touchdowns



on interceptions or fumble returns last season and also registered three safeties.

2. Houston. The Oilers defense scored touchdowns on three fumble recoveries in 1991 and also had two interceptions for scores.

3. Philadelphia. With that defense on the field, the Eagles are always a threat to make something happen. Frighteningly enough, they might be even better this year in their second season under defensive coordinator Bud Carson.

4. Kansas City. The Chiefs boast excellent kick blockers and a defense that plays hard and goes after the quarterback.

5. Cleveland. A surprise to round out the top five. The Browns tied with Washington for the league lead in touchdowns by interceptions with three, and they also scored on a fumble return. They should be better in coach Bill Belichick's second season.

Top Rookies to Watch

Vaughn Dunbar, RB, Saints. Dunbar's just what the doctor ordered for the Saints' conservative style. He should win the job as the featured back over oft-injured Dalton Hilliard and could be the even-money pick as rookie of the year.

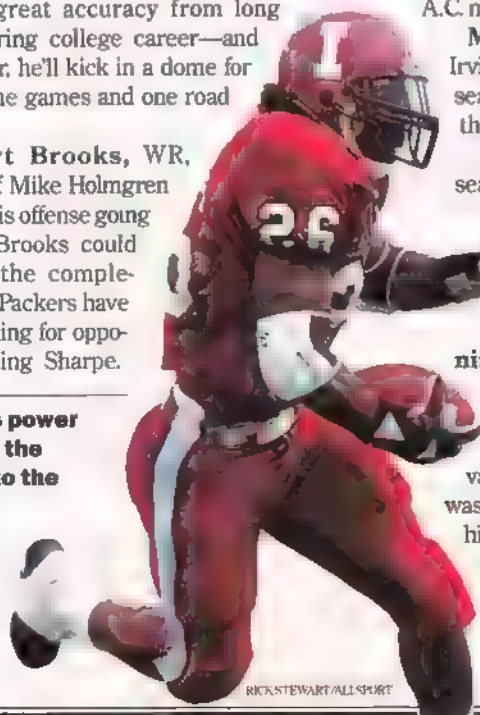
Tommy Vardell, RB, Browns. "Touchdown Tommy" has to crack a tough backfield, with Kevin Mack as his competition, but his versatility will have him in the lineup a lot.

Siran Stacy and Tony Brooks, RBs, Eagles. Philadelphia wants to establish a ground game, and one or both of these backs could see a lot of playing time.

Jason Hanson, K, Lions. Hanson showed great accuracy from long range during college career—and remember, he'll kick in a dome for eight home games and one road game.

Robert Brooks, WR, Packers. If Mike Holmgren can get this offense going quickly, Brooks could become the complement the Packers have been looking for opposite Sterling Sharpe.

Dunbar's power could be the answer to the Saints' prayer.



RICK STEWART/ALL SPORT

Interestingly, both attended South Carolina.

Don't Forget These Guys

Neal Anderson, RB, Bears. Anderson had an off year in 1991 because of hamstring problems but still managed nine touchdowns while playing hurt. He has something to prove this season.

James Brooks, RB, Browns. A newcomer to the Browns via Plan B, you can count on at least two big games from Brooks—when the opponent is his former team, the Bengals.

Gerald Riggs, Earnest Byner, and Ricky Ervins, RBs, Redskins. Riggs was Washington's designated touchdown scorer last season, Byner is always productive, and Ervins is ready to hit the big time.

Mark Clayton, WR, Dolphins. A lot of people thought he was washed up before last season, but Clayton came on to have an excellent year.

Tim Barnett, WR, Chiefs. A rookie last season, Barnett still managed to score five touchdowns. He may be ready to do big things.

Anthony Carter, WR, Vikings. He's been a forgotten part of the Vikings offense, but new coach Dennis Green promises to get A.C. more involved.

Michael Irvin, WR, Cowboys. Irvin scored eight touchdowns last season, but he may be ready for that one breakout year.

Eric Green, TE, Steelers. His season was stymied by injuries, but he'll be a tremendous threat if Pittsburgh ever decides on an offensive plan.

Randall Cunningham, QB, Eagles. Runnin' Randall was the wild card in this year's fantasy leagues; many a Rotisserie club was vanquished when Cunningham was hurt in the season opener. At his ramblin', scramblin' best, Cunningham not only passes for touchdowns but runs for them, but will he back all the way? We won't really know until the start of the season.

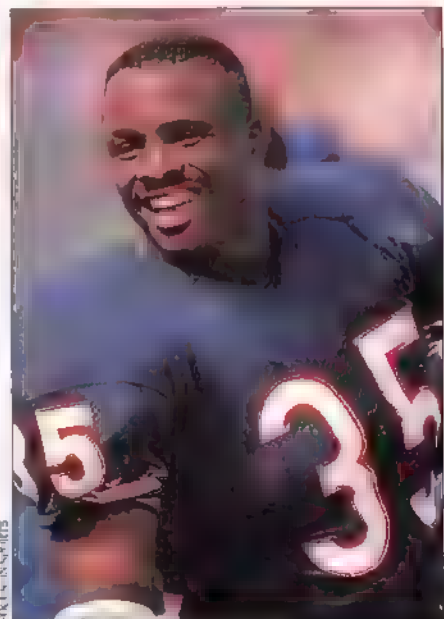


Lowery 'fell' to 83% last year. Have we been spoiled?

Jim Everett, QB, Rams. Everett had a brutal year with only 11 touchdown passes in 1991, and now we're left to wonder how new coach Chuck Knox will use him. Just remember: Knox didn't hesitate to let David Krieg pass in Seattle, so a comeback campaign by Everett might not be that much of a long shot.

John Friesz, QB, Chargers. Friesz learned under fire last season, but many think he is just a whisker away from being a productive, consistent quarterback. In a tough situation he still managed to pass for 12 touchdowns in 1991, so he might be worth a shot. ■

St. Louis-based writer HOWARD BALZER covered the NFL long before the Cardinals started humming "By the Time I Get to Phoenix..." This is Howard's first work for I.S.



If the hamstring is healthy, Anderson will get the last laugh on the league.



RICHARD MANTON/ALAMY SPORT

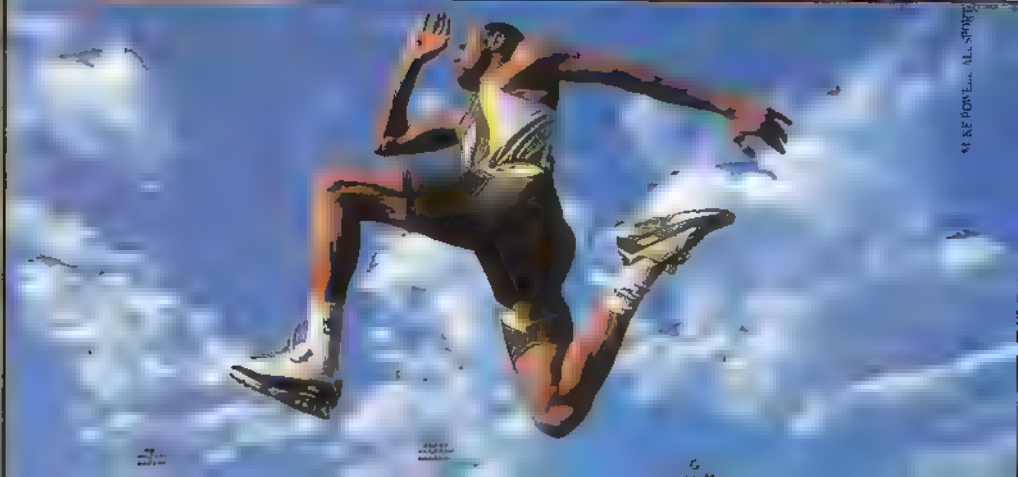
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To Reign In Spain

*Amid the countless
dramas and myriad events
of the 1992 Summer Olympic
Games, particular athletes and
certain stories are bound to
stand out as golden*

By TOM KERTES

Rivals From Jump Street

MIKE POWELL, A REGULAR guy who just happens to long-jump really well, had grown accustomed to being dismissed. He's been dissed by the track and field universe, which has ignored him forever as a distant No. 2 to Carl Lewis; by "the king," Lewis himself, who never bothered to give the slightest validation to Powell's abilities; and by the legendary Bob Beamon, whose "unreachable" record of 29'2½" the world had been chasing for a never-ending 23 years, but who's been so rapped up in the Zen-like spirituality of his own accomplishment that he rarely let anyone—much less a guy who had a chance to demythologize his record—into his world.

"I couldn't believe it," a track insider says. "At last year's Olympic festival Mike is just getting ready to jump. Suddenly there's a disturbance in the stands. Mike looks up—and Bob Beamon is leaving!"

Beamon made up for that *faux pas* at a press conference a day later. When a writer mentioned Powell's name, he looked up blankly and asked, "Mike who?"

Of course, being the second-best long jumper in the world and being so consistently underrated only served to whip Powell's emotions into a fury—and the long jump is an emotional event. Anyone who saw him in the weeks leading up to the Tokyo Track and Field World Championships last year had to know Powell was ready for something exceptional. "The days before the long jump



Powell in flight.

we couldn't calm him down at all," says his agent, Brad Hunt. "He was like a crazed yo-yo. Mike wouldn't sit down for a single minute. He was bouncing around in his room, repeating endlessly: 'I'm ready for Carl. I'm ready for Carl.'"

... Three more days to go till the long jump. Lewis is in the 100-meter dash finals that day. Powell refuses to go in the stadium. "You go for me," he tells his agent. "I just hope

Carl wins and sets a world record." "Why?" asks Hunt, knowing there's no love lost between the rivals. Powell flashes a smile. "Because when I beat him, that'll make my stage that much bigger."

If Powell's coach, Randy Huntington, and Hunt didn't know Modest Mike so well, they would have questioned his sanity at that point. Lewis was unbeaten, by Powell or anyone else, in 65 consecutive meets spread over 10 years. He was, is, and always will be



Powell gives Lewis the hug of a champion.

faster than Mike, who is a 10.2 100-meter sprinter to Lewis' 9.9. And Lewis is the greatest competitor the event has ever seen, an emotionless executioner, a clutch killer dropped into the cauldron of swirling emotions that is the long jump. "Carl could leap 28 feet in the middle of the night if you woke him," says Powell. "Hell, get me out of bed and I can't even walk."

The atmosphere on that hot August night in Tokyo "was beyond anything I or anyone else in track and field had ever experienced," says Washington State coach Rick Sloan.

"I've been to the Super Bowl, the World Series, the Final Four, but I've never seen anything like this." The surface was fast, the athletes pumped, the 86,000 fans in the stands screaming a cacophony of languages in anticipation—and there stood Beamon's superhuman record, like an unscalable wall staring everyone down.

Lewis, motoring down the runway like even he never motored before, takes off—but misses Beamon's record by a single inch on his first jump. "Damn," he mutters under his breath, annoyed but also glowing in the knowledge that this is his night and the big jump is obviously in him. However, one leap later, it's the ever-ignored Powell who almost flies out of the pit.

"Twenty-nine, four and a half," the announcer screeches. Two inches beyond the legend. "Mike who?" is suddenly Mike Powell, superstar world record holder.

And world champion as well. Lewis, with his next jump, also breaks Beamon's record—but he falls short of Powell's freshly-minted standard. The new champ congratulates his beaten foe, then goes nuts, his smile reaching from Tokyo all the way to his California

home. Lewis bitterly comments after the meet: "I had the greatest series in history. He had one jump."

But that's Lewis, the world champion self-aggrandizer, the sore loser (on those rare occasions when he loses) who is never at a loss for the well-placed knife or the ill-timed comment. And that's why Lewis, for all his otherworldly accomplishments on the track, has never caught the fancy of his competitors, the advertisers, or the fans. Much of the anti-Lewis feeling comes from the tasteless remarks he made in 1988 after Ben Johnson was stripped of his Olympic gold medal when he tested positive for steroids. Lewis, defeated the day before but grabbing the gold once Johnson was dethroned, blathered on self-righteously about "people taking unfair advantage of other competitors." Most people prefer a gracious winner—particularly when the victory comes second-hand. In this instance, silence would have been far more golden.

Lewis also is well-known behind the scenes as a champion manipulator of meets. During his 65-race streak he'd often jump just three or four times a season, avoiding top competitors when he was less than fit or until the mood hit. In a recent meet, Lewis reportedly forced organizers to disinvite No. 1-ranked Michael Johnson from a 200-meter dash, threatening not to show up at all if the less-known and therefore less-marketable Johnson ran. As usual, he won the power struggle—though, in this case at least, he lost the race.

Powell is as much an Everyman as Lewis is the king. A down-to-earth guy in a world of superstars, his Magic Johnson smile gives him an aura of a good man to shoot the breeze with, even when the topic isn't the long jump. Even the rivals' jumping styles fit



Lewis: More raw speed than skill.

as perfect antitheses of each other: Lewis, the sprinter who jumps, relies on his incomparable burners but is technically less than perfect, while Powell is the jumper's jumper who can't match Carl's speed but possesses the ultimate in technique.

"I know lots of people consider the World Championships a fluke," Powell says, "but that's OK. I'm willing to make the Olympics the ultimate confirmation of my abilities."

The rivals will meet in Barcelona, and the earth will tremble. In the meantime, Lewis continues to ignore Powell and has said uncharacteristically little of his Olympic chances. Powell is not likely to be psyched out, though; he's in unreal shape, jumping

29'2½" with insulting ease in his very first outdoor meet since Tokyo. Rumor has it he's even surpassed the *next* mythical long jump standard in practice. "Thirty feet?" he says, smiling mysteriously. "It's a done deal."

The "done deal" will mean a cool million (put up by Nike and Foot Locker) to the competitor who first flies that far for real. It'll happen, and probably in Barcelona, where the weather will sizzle, the runway will burn, and Lewis and Powell will face each other down on the largest stage in the world. It could get ugly—but it will be beautiful.

It's a Matter of Focus

IF YOU HAVE A 2 P.M. APPOINTMENT with Dan O'Brien, make sure you don't show until 2:30 or so. That way, you'll only have to wait for him another half an hour. O'Brien is, ahem, not what you'd call a particularly organized person. He tends to be, shall we say, a bit tardy—except for the times when he's *extremely* tardy. According to some track insiders, the only time Dan arrives on time is at the finish line.

Of course, that's pretty darn fortunate for the rest of the world. As it is, the tardy, disorganized O'Brien is one of the heaviest favorites in any track and field event in these Games, with a far better chance at the gold than such world-renowned competitors as Lewis, Michael Johnson, or Jackie Joyner-Kersey. If he was organized as well... well, it's a scary thought, to say the least.

Here's a scarier one: A mere three years back, no one outside the immediate O'Brien family knew of Dan's existence. In fact, given the makeup of that unique group, it's entirely possible that some people *inside* the family weren't totally aware of him, either. Five sisters and two brothers rampaged through the O'Brien household. Two of the kids are the parents' own; the rest are adopted. There are two Korean children, one American Indian, one who is Hispanic, and two—including Dan—who are half white, half black. It wasn't exactly impossible to get lost in that gorgeous mosaic.

"My parents were deeply idealistic people with this 'save the world' attitude you don't see much of these days," recalls O'Brien. "They were so unique, so full of love. It was a wonderful childhood."

In high school, and later at the University of Idaho, O'Brien flashed glimpses of his prodigious athletic talent, along with an equally prodigious appetite for girls, beer, and a few more girls. Naturally, when he was

forced to leave school in his junior year due to poor attendance and worse grades, amateur psychiatrists in the track world were quick to blame his "unusual" upbringing. "Garbage," he says flatly. "I was just a young kid and, like lots of young kids I liked to party. A lot."

A quick dose of junior college, a low-paying job at a golf course, and a long look into an empty future did wonders for O'Brien's attitude. "I was willing to give him another chance," says Idaho coach Mike Keller. "He was always such a fierce competitor and a basically good kid, but he needed a severe slap from life in order to take things more seriously." Of course O'Brien, who's only 25, is only human, and he still slips once in a while. As he says with a smile: "Sometimes the temptation is there to have a beer or two, to go out with my buddies instead of getting my proper rest on a Saturday night."

"Well, no one becomes Mr. Maturity overnight," says Washington State's Rich Sloan, O'Brien's field events coach. "One day a couple of months ago I tell Dan to be on the field at 1:30, all warmed up and ready to throw the discus. So I see him come out of the fieldhouse at 1:25, stretch twice, and begin to throw. 'Did you warm up?' I ask him. 'Yeah, in the fieldhouse,' he says. 'Dan, I just came through the fieldhouse, and you were not there,' I said. 'Listen, you know I get mad if you're late—but I'll get a lot madder if you throw without a proper warmup and hurt yourself.'" To O'Brien's credit, it never happened again.

If O'Brien wasn't still such a rambunctious puppy at times, the rest of the world could pretty much stay home and mail in the Olympic decathlon results. Come to think of it, get the postman anyway. Great Britain's Daley Thompson, whose world record Dan missed by a scant three points at the TAC championships in New York, sees O'Brien as a "9,500-point man." For the record, Thompson's mark is a "miniscule" 8,847 points.

Simply put, O'Brien is the Michael Jordan of the decathlon, the athlete who's not only destined to revolutionize the sport but do it with an insulting ease, without mussing a single hair. B.D. (Before Dan), the event was mainly owned by the Bill Toomeys and the Dave Jenkinses, generalists who were good athletes but not quite good enough to be world-class in any one of the 10 events. "Dan, with specialized training, could be world-class in the 100 meters, the hurdles, and the long jump," Keller says. "And he could do it within a year."

O'Brien is still a relative novice at some of

the throwing events, which concerns some experts but also sends his ultimate decathlon potential right off the charts. "Nor is he particularly big for a decathlete, only 6'2" and 185 pounds," adds Sloan, "but I'm telling you, there's nothing to worry about. He's a quick learner and has a high threshold of pain and an incredible curiosity to test his own limitations."

Sloan could have added "he's superb in the clutch" and no one would have argued. Before Tokyo, despite of all the explosive evidence to the contrary,

most experts looked at the combination of O'Brien's brief career, his lack of big-meet experience, and his semiflaky background and fully expected him to blow the gold. And sure enough, when he leaped seven inches below his best to blow both the high jump and a large lead after three events, everyone nodded knowingly and waited for the crash.

"I lost my focus there for a moment," O'Brien says, "but no big deal. I just refocused." Competing as if he was back in Idaho at the Big Sky championships, Dan simply blew away the rest of the world in the following 400 meters to set a personal best. "I told myself, 'If you can do it back home every day in practice, there's no reason why you can't do it here.'"

Yes, this is one relaxed guy, and relaxation is the essential ingredient in reaching your athletic potential under great pressure. Of course, too much relaxation might also keep you from being on time for lunch dates—but after Barcelona, who's going to care?



O'Brien: Relax to win.

Reversal of Fortunes

JUST TO BE A MARATHONER, you've got to be somewhat unique. To be a world-class marathoner, it also helps if you're an eclectic combination of Buddha (perfect stillness and patience), Immanuel Kant (philosophical self-containment), and Mother Teresa (a generosity of spirit combined with low body fat).

And if you think that's tough, just try to be a world-class *American* marathoner. Now these guys have to be something really special.

"We live in a kind of an athletic Siberia in this country," says Dr. David Martin, who coaches Steve Spence, the United States' best hope for a marathon medal in Bar-



Spence: Aguanan.

celona. "While our track and field athletes are in college they're pampered beyond all proportion, much like the Eastern Europeans used to be. But once they reach their prime, which is just about at graduation time at age 22 or 23, there's no more school, no more help, no more coaching, no nothing. They're just left out in the cold."

The freezeout includes an absence of financial aid as well, which explains why an entire generation of top American distance runners have been "lost" since Alberto Salazar last won an international marathon in 1982. "That's when money entered road racing," notes Don Paul, Spence's agent. "And with no other help, these kids had to race far too often. Not out of greed, mind you, but just to make a basic, lousy living."

Spence came close to becoming one of the lost boys. By 1989 he already was 27 years old and had just a couple of mediocre marathons behind him. "I was ready to quit," he says. "I began to lose my focus, spending most of my time on just trying to figure out why the heck I was running."

Enter Martin, the head of the Athletic Congress' new Elite Athlete program, designed to recover the lost marathoners and discover new ones with potential. "I heard about Steve and knew he was depressed," says the coach, "but I loved what I saw of him on tapes and felt he had in him the touch of greatness." So Martin called Spence and asked if he was interested in working together. "For the first time in his life I offered Steve the systematic approach—and frankly, with the marathon, that's the only approach to have."

Spence grabbed on to the lifeline—and he was out of the cold. The owner of the ideal marathon temperament—introspective, deep-thinking, patient to a fault—he threw himself at solving the "problem" of his running career with the fervor of an average athlete who deep down knows he could be destined for greatness.

Martin first drilled Spence in the importance of fluid intake. "The marathon is not a running event, but an event of energy management," Martin says. "Steve, as a track racer, never drank. A marathoner not only must drink during the race but must learn exactly what to drink, when to drink, and how to drink."

Next they adjusted—indeed, reversed—Spence's training methods. Like most long-



Slow and strong wins it.

distance runners, Steve would put in six to eight weeks of high-volume workouts (110 to 140 miles a week), follow up with lower-volume high-intensity workouts for three or four weeks, and then race. "That may work for most guys, but it didn't for Steve," Martin says. "So we tried to do it backward, doing the high-volume training closer to his race."

That it worked perfectly may be the understatement of the century: In the very first race Spence ran with his novel training method, he moved from mediocrity (2:16) to something approaching world-class (2:12.)

The mental aspect of running a marathon came last. "In this race you try to use the least possible energy in the early miles and still stay within striking distance," says the coach. "Then, with the most energy left, you strike." Luckily, patience is Spence's middle name.

Before the Tokyo World Championships last August, Martin and his athlete worked out a plan that called for Spence to break the early part of the race into five-kilometer segments, which he would cover in a virtual crawl of 16 minutes apiece. "It's going to be hot and humid as hell," Martin explained to Spence. The worried runner replied: "Yeah, but what if I'm in last place at the halfway point?"

Well, at five kilometers that's exactly where he was. At the 10K mark Spence had moved up four spots—hardly anything for the world to worry about. But then a funny thing happened. The unknown American with the unorthodox training regimen began to pass Olympic medalists, world champions, and other top-rated runners by the drove. He was picking up the pace while the big-timers were standing, sitting, lying down, or barfing at the side of the road.

Patience paid off, specialized strategy had conquered. At 37K Spence caught the lead pack, moving from 26th place to third in what seemed like a New York second. When he held on to claim the bronze, he became the first U.S. World Championship marathon medalist in human memory.

The course in Barcelona, fortunately for Spence, is nearly an exact replica of the scene of his Tokyo triumph. Even better, it features a five-kilometer hill right at the end of the race, a tremendous advantage for a strength runner like Spence.

"We hear all about the awesome African

runners, the superb Japanese runners, the tough Italian runners," says Martin, "but frankly, we don't give a damn. If on race day Steve is the best Steve can be—and I assure you he will be—he'll be deadly."

Deadly enough for a medal? "You bet."

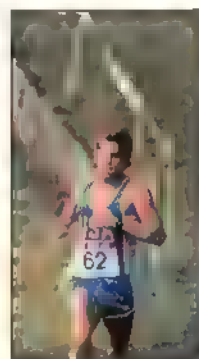
If You Really Want to Stretch Yourself...

IT'S A WELL-KNOWN FACT THAT the favorite fantasy of most red-blooded American males is to experience the adventures of a Napoleonic military courier. First, you begin your mission on horseback, riding over impossible terrain and unscalable obstacles. Just your luck, you meet an enemy soldier who draws his sword, and before you can say, "The nerve of this guy!" he attacks. You win the duel, remount—and suddenly confront another whipper-snapper brandishing a pistol in your direction with ill intentions. Naturally, you shoot him, but not before he wounds your horse. Now you must run like hell—until you reach a river, at which point you must swim like hell. With powerful strokes you get across. Whew! Mission Impossible accomplished.

Well, while the rest of us spoiled brats use remote controls so we don't have to walk to our own TVs, Mike Gostigian lives these adventures every day. He's a leading medal contender on America's modern pentathlon Olympic team, a still-obscure but ever-growing sport (though it's actually among the most popular Olympic events in Europe) that's based on the activities of this *mucho macho* courier guy.

Of course, Gostigian is not shooting or dueling anybody; killing is strictly out in the peaceful world of the modern pentathlon. However, a pentathlete must possess exceptional skills in five totally diverse athletic areas—horseback riding and jumping, fencing, pistol shooting, cross-country running, and swimming—in order to get to the top of the heap. That's as tall an order as you'll find in sports.

"Not just because I happen to be good at it, but the modern pentathlon really is the most



Gostigian: Greatness in diversity.

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difficult *diverse* sport in the world," Gostigian says with a smile. "So, yes, you could say that we're the greatest diverse athletes." Hmm, but what will the decathletes, long acknowledged as the last word when it comes to athletic diversity, say about that? "What can they?" asks Gostigian, secure in his argument. "Dan [O'Brien] and Dave [Johnson] may make lots of Reebok commercials, but I bet you anything they can't shoot or ride a horse."

Well, yes, but . . . "Look, in the decathlon all the skills involve track and field, which deals exclusively in speed and strength," Gostigian says. "But many of the skills we need are mutually exclusive of one another. Swimming not only has nothing to do with fencing, but the strong hamstrings you must develop to be a top fencer actually restrict you from swimming fast."

Gostigian should know. Like most American modern pentathletes, he was a competitive swimmer who proved to be "just not quite good enough" at the world level. "I was 17 years old, working out on John DuPont's estate and getting extremely frustrated with my swimming," he recalls. "So one day Mr. DuPont literally dragged me out of the pool, walked me over to his shooting range, and put a pistol in my hand. It was the most fun I've ever had, shooting a pistol while still dripping, and I knew right away this was it for me. I became a modern pentathlete for life."

The first event of the three-day pentathlon competition is fencing. Each competitor grabs his epee and faces every other competitor in turn, each match an explosion of energy lasting only one touch. "It's the ultimate do-or-die event," says Gostigian, "so you have to know your opponents' tendencies, and know them well."

The second day opens with the swim race, a 300-meter freestyle push into hell. "There's no finesse involved here; it's all guts," says the 150-pound Gostigian. "The last 50 meters is about the most painful thing you'll ever experience." Mike obviously owns a high threshold of pain—not to mention his world-class swimming background. He's among the top two pentathlon swimmers in the world.

Next comes the target shooting, which is held right after the swim. "Your body is all shaky from the effort in the pool, so now you have to do something where perfect stillness is required," Gostigian says. Competitors use .22-caliber pistols, aiming for a perfect score of 200. "Few reach that. This is truly the pivotal event of the pentathlon, one that requires steel nerves, and one that often separates the men from the boys."

The third day opens with the run, on a 4,000-meter cross-country course that must

be run in 14 minutes and 15 seconds—*exactly*—for 1,000 points. Three points are added or subtracted for each second the runner is slower or faster than the standard. "I feel real good about the run in Barcelona," Gostigian says. "It'll be run in my kind of weather, on my kind of course." That means the pentathletes should expect inhuman heat and humidity, and a 100-meter elevation right before the finish line.

The closing event is the spectacular riding competition, staged over a 600-meter course with 13 jumps. A clean ride, with no faults and done under 1:43, earns 1,100 points for the rider. "It figures that they leave the mystery event for last," Gostigian says. The mystery? The name of the horse a given competitor will ride is pulled out of a hat a whole 20 minutes before the beginning of the event. As Mike says, "He could be a terror or a pig." You get the wrong horse, and all your hard work for four years, plus the first four events, is down the drain.

"Yeah, with the wrong animal you can be a done deal," Gostigian says. "But you know, those Napoleonic couriers couldn't exactly be too choosy about their horses, either."

Rubber Ducks and Gold Medals

THE UNITED STATES HAS 200,000 registered swimmers—the most in the world by far—breaststroking, freestyling, and butterflying themselves toward waterlogged glory. That fact goes a long way to explain why the U.S. is the predominant swimming power in the world.

Now imagine you live in a tiny country the size of Rhode Island, with a population just slightly larger than that of New York State. Imagine further that your country has a mere nine Olympic-size pools, not a single one of which is reserved exclusively for its Olympic hopefuls. Such hopefuls therefore often must work out while avoiding the public during their laps and navigating their way around rubber duckies, for gosh sakes. And then imagine that the swimming squad of your country will give the U.S. its strongest competition in Barcelona.

You can't even imagine it, right? Still, it's true. Hungary, the country in question, owns the planet's second most powerful team—and it's not even close. Rubber duckies notwithstanding, Hungarians currently own world records in the men's 200- and 400-meter individual medleys, by Tamas Darnyi; the men's 100-

meter breaststroke, by Norbert Rozsa; and as the women's 100- and 200-meter backstroke, by a 17-year-old sonnet to shyness named Krisztina Egerszegi, whose nickname, appropriately enough, is "Little Mouse."

Consider also that in four of these five events the Hungarians are so dominant they're already as good as gold. Darnyi is unbeaten; in fact, no one has come within two duckies of him since 1986. Egerszegi, young and still improving practically each time out, has been equally pristine for four years now, or since she won her first Olympic gold in Seoul.

Absurdly enough, the list of Hungarian medal contenders doesn't even end there. At last year's world championships in Perth, Australia, Tunde Szabo finished second, behind Egerszegi, in both backstrokes. Attila Czene, an explosively developing youngster, and ex-Olympic champion Jozsef Szabo both have outstanding chances to medal behind Darnyi in the individual medleys. Rozsa and Karoly Guttler are top medal candidates, along with American Mike Barrowman, in the 200-meter breaststroke event as well. (Barrowman's coach, naturally, just happens to be Hungarian.)

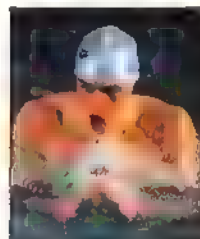
All this can't be a coincidence. What's the Hungarians' secret? Is it coaching, or what? Is there a secret at all? No one knows for sure, mainly because the Hungarians train as if there is a secret—secretively, that is. Still, a consensus of experts we quizzed touched on several fascinating points:

Government support: Apparently, the new non-Communist government continues to support the brilliant swim squad for political reasons. Of course, that still doesn't explain why the 75 other countries where swimming is similarly supported don't get similar results.

Organization: Despite the pool shortage and the rubber duckies, Hungarian swimming is highly organized. The head coach, Tamas Szechy, is considered a near-deity—and his word is law.

A superior system: "American coaches get paid for the *number* of swimmers they train," says Jozsef Nagy, Barrowman's Hungarian coach. "Hungarian coaches get paid based on results. They concentrate on a smaller number of swimmers but give each one more individual attention."

Training methods:



Rozsa: In gear.



'Little Mouse' will roar.

"Szechy's drive for excellence is near-maniacal," says the U.S. assistant head swimming coach, John Urbanchik, a (what else?) Hungarian émigré. "And in Darnyi and Egerszegi in particular, he's blessed with two kids who are nearly equally committed."

Technique: Most American coaches poo-poo even the possibility of technical innovations as the reason for Hungarian superiority. Truth, or jealousy? Or a heavy-duty state of denial? Whichever, it's undisputable that the Hungarians tend to excel in the technical events, the breaststroke and the backstroke, as well as the events requiring the largest workload, the individual medleys. (They're quite a bit less outstanding in the "pure talent" events, the butterfly and the freestyle.)

"No question, the Hungarian coaches have been instrumental in developing the new 'pull and lunge' breaststroke, which comes much closer to Sir Isaac Newton's law of creating momentum through continuous motion," says Urbanchik. "Their backstroke excellence, however, is more a stroke of luck: Egerszegi and Szabo just happen to own the ideal backstroke bodies—incredibly long arms, very small hips—and they love to train."

It's remarkable how human nature gets corrupted by success, though, even in Hungary. Szechy, once known as a nice guy, is now said (by some wagging tongues, anyway) to be a tyrant, an egomaniac who won't listen to anyone, a usurper who takes all the credit while his assistants do most of the work. Guttler's personal coach, Laszlo Kiss, and Czene's original mentor, Peter Banka, used to have their knives out for Szechy quite openly, but over the last year or so there's been an uneasy public truce. Even Szechy's favorite student, Darnyi, seems distant from the master these days. Between the primitive conditions and all the political infighting, could it be possible that swimming's latest dynasty is already ready for a fall?

"Yeah, sure," says Nagy, his voice dripping with sarcasm. "Let me tell you something: They're going to win at least five golds in Barcelona and might be good for as many as eight." Eight? Even with the best intentions we could find "only" seven Hungarian contenders for gold.

"Yeah, but this is the real Hungarian secret," says Nagy. "They're going to start Egerszegi not just in the backstrokes but in the women's 400 individual medley as well. And she'll win by five lengths." ■

TOM KERTES surely has earned an honorary gold medal for his Olympian effort on this journalistic pentathlon. Tom's preview of the 1992 NBA draft ran in July.

By BARRY WILNER

Olympic Capsules

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Top U.S. Performers: You're having this wonderful dream: The U.S. Olympic team has Michael and Magic in the backcourt, Patrick at center, the Mailman and Charles up front. The bench has Scottie Pippen, John Stockton, David Robinson, Chris Mullin, Larry Bird, Clyde Drexler, and Christian Laettner. Hey, you don't have to wake up. That's the dream team USA Basketball named as its Olympic squad for Barcelona. Michael Jordan, Patrick Ewing, and Mullin are repeat visitors—and won't it be a ball playing for Chuck Daly this year after playing for the ultimate ugly American, Bob Knight, in 1984?

Top International Teams: The world political situation has changed the face of international basketball. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia would have been the main challengers, but neither country exists any longer. The Lithuanian team, led by the Golden State Warriors' Sarunas Marciulionis and several former Soviet gold medalists, will be the top threat. Croatia and Slovenia have been recognized by the IOC, so the Yugoslav team will be split. Brazil, Italy, and host Spain also could have interesting teams.

Top International Performers: Marciulionis, Arvydas Sabonis, and Rimas Kurtinaitis make the Lithuanians tough. Drazen Petrovic of the New Jersey Nets and Tony Kukoc, the top player in Europe, strengthen the Croatian team. Brazil has the sharpshooting Oscar Schmidt, while Puerto Rico has several former U.S. college stars.

History: Until 1972 the United States never had lost a game in the Olympics. The final that year at Munich was so controversial and so poorly officiated that most people do not regard it as a valid contest. However, nobody downplays the validity of the beating the Soviet Union gave the Americans at Seoul in '88, their first Olympic meeting in the medals round since '72.

Outlook: Are you kidding? As good as the Lithuanians and Croatians might be, they won't come without a half-court shot of the Americans, who should have every game clinched by halftime, even under the unfamiliar international rules.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Top U.S. Performers: Rutgers coach Theresa Greutz will attempt to get a new international winning streak started after a loss to Cuba at the Pan Am Games snapped a 42-game string. Greutz can choose from dozens of collegiate and former Olympic stars. Look for Dawn Staley of Virginia and Val Whiting of NCAA champion Stanford to be the leaders. Teresa Edwards, a member of the '88 gold medal Olympic team and the '90 Pan Am squad, brings international savvy.

Top International Teams: Despite its upset of the United States at the Pan Ams, don't expect Cuba to challenge. The best international teams are from Brazil, which won the Pan Am gold, and the Unified Team.

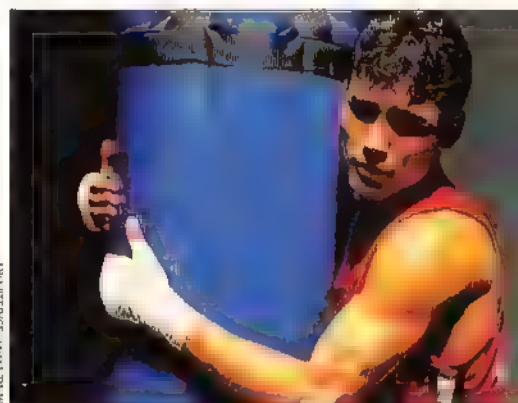
Top International Performers: It's difficult to determine who will be on hand for the Unified Team and who might play for other former Soviet satellites that now are free. Regardless, the best foreign player will be the languid Hortencia of Brazil, the finest female pure shooter around.

History: U.S. women have routed the field in the last two Olympics, their first gold medals. Before that, the Soviets tended to be in control. Most of the great players from the '84 and '88 teams no longer are available to the United States, but other nations don't rebuild nearly as quickly. No country can match the coaching available here.

Outlook: The Americans, with the added inspiration of the Pan Am failure, should win easily. They'll play an uptempo style and the best defense. If they hit their three-pointers, a gold medal should be no problem.

BOXING LIGHT FLYWEIGHT (106 pounds)

Outlook: Since this group was added to the



De la Hoya's toughest foe? Himself.

program in 1964, only Paul Gonzales has won gold for the United States in a division often dominated by Oriental and Latin American fighters. Watch out for boxers from South Korea, Japan, and Bulgaria. Eric Griffin of Broussard, La., has won the last two world championships.

FLYWEIGHT (112½ pounds)

Outlook: Six Americans have won in this group, and Tim Austin of Cincinnati has shown plenty of spunk in international bouts. However, beating Istvan Kovacs of Hungary, Su Choe-Chole of North Korea, and the inevitable Cuban representative will be a major problem.

BANTAMWEIGHT (119½ pounds)

Outlook: When Kennedy McKinney won this division at Seoul, he was the first American since 1904 to take a gold among bantams. Italy, South Korea, and Germany—plus Cuba, of course—always seem to have a solid fighter in this class. Bulgaria's Serafim Todorov will be the favorite.

FEATHERWEIGHT (126 pounds)

Outlook: American Tim Robinson was hurt by strange officiating at the '91 world championships. Should he get through the Olympic trials, Robinson might have a good shot at upending Kirkor Kirkorov of Bulgaria or Park Duk-Kyu of South Korea.

LIGHTWEIGHT (132 pounds)

Outlook: Pernell Whitaker and Howard Davis came out of this division with gold medals. Oscar de la Hoya, probably the next great lightweight, was nervous in his world championships debut at Australia last year and lost in the opening round, his first defeat in four years. However, an in-control de la Hoya would be too much for Marco Rudolph of Germany.

LIGHT WELTERWEIGHT (140 pounds)

Outlook: Since world champion Konstantin Tszyu of the Unified Team seems more interested in turning pro, the division could be wide open for an American. Vernon Forrest was impressive in getting to the world championships final, but getting through the trials will be just as big a test. Winning Olympic gold at 140 pounds got Sugar Ray Leonard started in 1976, but it didn't help Jerry Page (1984) much.

WELTERWEIGHT (148 pounds)

Outlook: Here come the Cubans. Juan Hernandez is nearly untouchable in this weight class. The Cubans haven't been in the Olympics since 1980, and every one of them will be itching to prove that they're as superior in this elite event as they have been at Pan American Games and world championships. Since 1932, the only American to win in this category was Mark Breland, who romped through a depleted field in 1984.

LIGHT MIDDLEWEIGHT (156 pounds)

Outlook: Perhaps the biggest theft in Olympic boxing history occurred at Seoul, when Roy Jones lost to Park Si-Hun in the final. Jones so badly outboxed the Korean that he recorded 86 hits to only 32 for Park on the computer used by NBC. Apparently three of the five judges did not want the Korean to be shut out in the decision process, so they each voted for him. The result forced radical changes in the scoring system of amateur boxing. Of course, none of that will matter when Cuba's fearsome Juan Lemus steps into the ring. He should be the most prohibitive favorite in the entire boxing field.

MIDDLEWEIGHT (165½ pounds)

Outlook: Not since Michael Spinks in 1976 has the United States won this division. In fact, the only other medalist in the middleweight division for the U.S. team since Montreal was Virgil Hill in the watered-down 1984 field. The Koreans, Cubans, and Germans will provide a big challenge for top-rated Italian Tommaso Russo.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT (179 pounds)

Outlook: Torsten May of Germany, the world champion, and Andrei Kumyavka of the Unified Team figure to be the favorites in a division the United States often wins. Andrew Maynard collected gold in 1988, Leon Spinks in 1976, and a guy named Cassius Clay was the light heavy champion in 1960.

HEAVYWEIGHT (200½ pounds)

Outlook: Felix Savon of Cuba. That's the only name to remember in this category, where the Cubans have a half-dozen other standouts waiting to unseat the powerhouse Savon. This weight class was created in 1984, when a division for 180- to 200-pounders was needed. Henry Tillman and Ray Mercer have won the only golds awarded so far, but Savon is a good bet to break the U.S.'s spotless record.

SUPER HEAVYWEIGHT (over 200½ pounds)

Outlook: Cuba's Roberto Balado is the world champion. His top challengers might be Svilen Russinoff of Bulgaria and Cincinnati's Larry Donald, who lost to Russinoff at the worlds. However, Donald isn't likely to outpoint anyone—and knocking out Balado is a long shot.

MEN'S GYMNASTICS

Event

all-around
floor exercise
vault
parallel bars
horizontal bars
pommel horse
rings

Probable U.S. Competitors

Scott Keswick, Jarrod Hanks, Lance Ringnald
Mike Racanelli, Lance Ringnald
John Roethlisberger, Lance Ringnald
Dom Minicucci, John Roethlisberger
Scott Keswick, Jarrod Hanks
Dom Minicucci, Jarrod Hanks
Scott Keswick, Paul O'Neill

Outlook: Look for any member of the Unified Team and China's Li Jing in the all-around. The Americans again would be lucky to crack the top 10.

The Unified Team, Germany, and Japan should be the powers in the floor exercise, with the Unified Team's Vitali Scherbo and Igor Korubchinski using power and grace unmatched by competitors from other nations. The Americans would settle for a top 10 from Racanelli and/or Ringnald.

South Korea's You Ok Youl surprised Korubchinski at the worlds in Paris in the vault, the one discipline where the former Soviet Union struggled. This is the most wide open of the men's events, with Canada, Puerto Rico, and Romania contending. In the parallel bars, Alexi Voropaev of the Unified Team tied with Jing for the world crown. The depth of the Unified Team is impressive in this event; the lack of strength by the Americans is not. Jing also is exciting on the horizontal bars but not as strong technically as the two Unified Team members, either of whom could win. Keswick and Hanks are the top U.S. threats, but not for a medal. On the pommel horse, Jing, Scherbo, and North Korea's Pae Gil Su all tied for the gold at the last worlds. Jing and Scherbo will contend for gold in other disciplines, but Su's solo hope is the horse—so give the North Korean an edge. O'Neill placed fourth on the rings at the apparatus world championships in Paris, which was a major surprise. However, a sweep by the Unified Team is far more likely than his winning a medal. Scherbo certainly holds the advantage here.



The rings aren't one of Ringnald's strengths.

WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS

Event

all-around
floor exercise
vault
uneven bars
balance beam

Probable U.S. Competitors

Kim Zmeskal, Betty Okino
Kim Zmeskal, Chelle Stack
Kerri Strug, Stephanie Woods
Betty Okino, Kerri Strug
Kim Zmeskal, Betty Okino

Outlook: In the all-around, Zmeskal vs. Svetlana Bogunskaya has become a bitter rivalry. The American has come out ahead recently, so look

for a big effort from the Russian and from Hungary's Henrietta Onodi. However, Zmeskal has become the steadiest gymnast in the world, if not the most spectacular one, and steadiness wins Olympic titles. Zmeskal also is the best in the world in the **floor exercise**, as she proved as the individual apparatus world champion on the floor, by far her best event. Unless she turns in a sub-par performance, Zmeskal should be too strong for Onodi, the world runner-up, and a bevy of former Soviets. Onodi, a relative newcomer to the world scene, is the only non-Unified Team member likely to collect a **vault** medal. Boguinskaya and Oksana Tshusovtina will lead the Unified Team in one of its stronger events. Okino finished second to Romania's Laviana Milosovici in the **uneven bars** at the worlds in April, despite a 9.90 on her best effort. Romania is especially strong on the bars, while the Unified Team is not. Strug would need significant improvement to crack the top five. On the **balance beam** Zmeskal, who could win three golds—four if the U.S. team soars—is the favorite. In taking the worlds, she was relatively unchallenged. Again, the Unified Team has struggled in this event recently.

MEN'S SWIMMING

FREESTYLE

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
50 meters	Matt Biondi, Tom Jager
100 meters	Matt Biondi, Jon Olsen
200 meters	Doug Gjensten, Joe Hudepohl
400 meters	Dan Jorgensen, Shaun Jordan
1,500 meters	Sean Killion, Lawrence Frostad

Outlook: Biondi won't be going for a fistful of gold this time. He does, however, have an excellent chance for individual honors in the 50 and 100.

The 50 should be another world-record tidal wave between Biondi and Jager—nobody else is close. Olsen is capable of stealing the 100, but it should come down to Biondi, France's Stephan Caron, and the Unified Team's Alexander Popov.

Gold in the 200 is a long shot, with the Europeans the favorites. Australia's Kieren Perkins went for a world record earlier this year in the 400 and must hold off the Germans. The suicidal 1,500 could be an Australian party.

BUTTERFLY

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
100 meters	Pablo Morales, Melvin Stewart
200 meters	Melvin Stewart, David Wharton

Outlook: The 100 fly, along with the 50 free, should be the highlight encounter of the men's competition. Surinam's Anthony Nesty, Germany's Michael Gross, Stewart, Morales, and France's Valdislov Kulikov all are capable of world marks. All five could come down to the wall together.

Stewart will be the U.S. man in the 200, pushed by the veteran Gross and Hungary's Tamas Darnyi. Don't count out the dedicated Wharton, either.

BACKSTROKE

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
100 meters	David Berkoff, Jeff Rouse
200 meters	Royce Sharp, Tripp Schwenk

Outlook: The 100 is another race too close to handicap. Rouse (ranked No. 1 in 1991), Spain's Martin Zubero, Canada's Mark Tewksburg, and Berkoff all are capable of two spectacular laps and a world record. On a hunch, give the edge to the Spaniard, who could become a national hero with a win—or a deity with a sweep. Zubero is top-ranked in the 200.

BREASTSTROKE

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
100 meters	Hans Dersch, Nelson Diebel
200 meters	Mike Barrowman, Roque Santos

Outlook: Any of five Europeans will be favored in the 100, with Norbert Rozsa of Hungary very strong. The U.S. swimmers aren't nearly in his class.

However, Barrowman should make up for that in the 200, where he's the class of the field by a gigantic margin. Let's go out on a limb and pick Barrowman to smash the world record again.

MEDLEYS

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
200 meters	Greg Burgess, Ron Karnaugh
400 meters	Eric Namesnik, David Wharton

Outlook: Darnyi will be the favorite in both races, but if he doesn't have a sizable lead heading into the final freestyle leg he could get caught by a pumped-up American. However, everyone will have to improve to challenge the Hungarian.

RELAYS

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
400 free	Matt Biondi, Joe Hudepohl, Tom Jager, Jon Olsen
800 free	Doug Gjensten, Joe Hudepohl, Melvin Stewart
400 medley	David Berkoff, Matt Biondi, Hans Dersch, Melvin Stewart

Outlook: This is the one area where the United States is still untouchable. Nobody can match a team of Biondi, Hudepohl, Jager, and Olsen in the 400 free. In fact, the No. 2 U.S. team might win silver if it was allowed to compete. The 800 free shouldn't be any closer, nor should the medley. If the conditions are right world records could come in all three relays.

WOMEN'S SWIMMING

FREESTYLE

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
50 meters	Angel Martino, Jenny Thompson
100 meters	Nichole Haislett, Jenny Thompson
200 meters	Nicole Haislett, Jenny Thompson
400 meters	Janet Evans, Erika Hansen
800 meters	Janet Evans, Erika Hansen

Outlook: Martino, who's getting a second chance—as Angel Meyers, she was barred from the Olympics in 1988 after testing positive for steroid use—and the tireless Thompson face the world's fastest sprinter in China's Yong Zhuang. A couple of medals seems likely in the 50.

Thompson probably will be shooting for second behind Haislett in the 100 and 200, where French star Catherine Plewinski will be a formidable foe. Haislett could be the star of these Games. So could Evans, of course. Coming off her golden haul in Seoul, she is one of the few returning stars and holds a big edge in the 400—and a bigger margin in the 800. Hansen is no slouch, though, and Evans might not be as finely tuned coming into her second Olympics.

As always, the Germans will be strong in the middle distances.



Sanders should surface as the favorite in the 200m butterfly

BUTTERFLY

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
100 meters	Crissy Ahmann-Leighton, Summer Sanders
200 meters	Summer Sanders, Angie Wester-Kreig

Outlook: The Chinese are very strong in the 100, with the fastest time in 1991. Hong Qian of China would be favored, but Sanders has been pointing to Barcelona for four years. In the 200, the Japanese duo of Rie Shito and Yoko Kando isn't likely to push Sanders, but they could contend for the silver and bronze.

BACKSTROKE

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
100 meters	Lea Loveless, Janie Wagstaff
200 meters	Lea Loveless, Janie Wagstaff

Outlook: The 100 should be wide open, with the Hungarians, Germans,

and Australians in the medals chase, along with both Americans. Wagstaff is the best U.S. bet in both races, but Hungary's Krisztina Egervari has been superb in the 200.

BREASTSTROKE

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
100 meters	Anita Nall, Megan Kleine
200 meters	Anita Nall, Jill Johnson

Outlook: The 15-year-old Nall has superstar written all over her. She is ranked first in the 200 and has moved up quickly in the 100, and she heads to Barcelona favored in both races and as the only likely U.S. medalist. Elena Rudovskaya of the Unified Team is excellent, the latest strong Russian breaststroker.

MEDLEYS

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
200 meters	Summer Sanders, Nicole Haislett
400 meters	Summer Sanders, Erika Hansen

Outlook: Here's where Sanders, Haislett, or Hansen could stamp herself as the meet's top swimmer. Sanders has a better chance at the shorter distance, where China's Li is No. 1. Grit Muller and Daniela Hunger, like all German women, are strong challengers.

RELAYS

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
400 free	Crissy Ahmann-Leighton, Nicole Haislett, Angel Martino, Anita Nall
400 medley	Crissy Ahmann-Leighton, Meagan Kleine, Lea Loveless, Janie Wagstaff

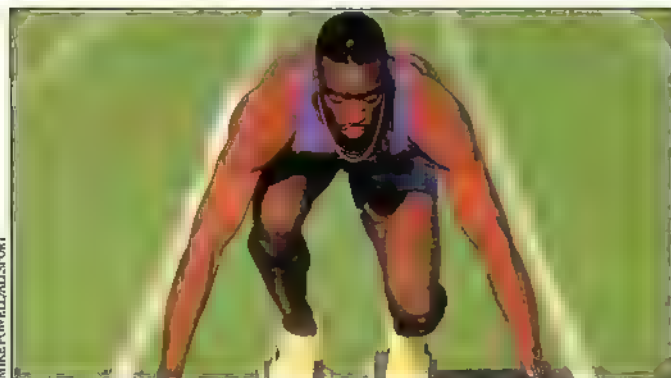
Outlook: American depth often is decisive in freestyle, and this is a very strong team. However, the Chinese and Germans will be tough. The medley, where U.S. swimmers have had some sensational races recently, could be a two-nation battle with Germany.

MEN'S TRACK & FIELD

SPRINTS

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
100 meters	Carl Lewis, Leroy Burrell, Dennis Mitchell
200 meters	Michael Johnson, Leroy Burrell, Floyd Heard
400 meters	Michael Johnson, Antonio Pettigrew, Danny Everett
110m hurdles	Greg Foster, Tony Dees, Renaldo Nehemiah
400m hurdles	Danny Harris, Kevin Young, David Patrick

Outlook: They crushed the 100 world record, they swept the world championships, and they should be 1-2-3 at the Olympics. Look for a world-record



The meteoric Johnson will be sprinting for a golden double-dip.

time from the American winner. Johnson should be untouchable in the 200, with Fredericks and Brazil's Robson da Silva battling tightly for silver. Johnson also is tops in the 400, where another American sweep is possible. Cuba's Roberto Hernandez might be the spoiler.

Foster, the most consistent hurdler in history, will go for his first Olympic gold in the 110. If he stays ahead of his countrymen he should do it. All three Americans, particularly Harris, would be major threats in the 400 to Zambia's Samuel Matete, who moved to No. 1 in the world while running for Auburn.

MIDDLE-DISTANCE RACES

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
800 meters	Mark Everett, George Kersh, Johnny Gray
1,500 meters	Jim Spivey, Terrence Herrington, Steve Scott

Outlook: The longest distance at which an American figures to challenge is the 800, with Everett, but a slew of Kenyans will pressure Brazil's Jose Luis Barbosa the most. Algeria's Nourredine Morceli might be the best men's bet of all in the 1,500, with Winfred Kirochi of Kenya right behind.

LONG-DISTANCE RACES

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
steeplechase	Brian Diemer, Mark Croghan, Dan Nelson
5,000 meters	Bob Kennedy, Aaron Ramirez, Steve Plasencia
10,000 meters	Shannon Butler, Aaron Ramirez, Steve Plasencia
marathon	Steve Spence, Bob Kempainen, Ed Eyestone
20km walk	Tim Lewis, Allen James, Gary Morgan
50km walk	Carl Schueler, Marco Evoniuk, Herm Nelson

Outlook: Kenya is likely to sweep the steeplechase and possibly the 10,000. Italy's Salvatore Antibo slumped late last year, so the question becomes, is he primed? If so, he should win the 5,000.

Spence has some nice credentials in the marathon and could pull a Frank Shorter. More likely, though, the Japanese will have the edge. Ernesto Canto of Mexico, ranked just third last year, gets up for the big events. A top 20 for the Americans would be acceptable.

RELAYS

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
4x100 meters	Carl Lewis, Leroy Burrell, Dennis Mitchell, Andre Cason
4x400 meters	Antonio Pettigrew, Michael Johnson, Danny Everett, Andrew Valmon

Outlook: With Lewis, Burrell, Mitchell, and probably Cason, the United States can beat itself in the 400 only by dropping the baton or something just as silly. The 1,600 might not be as certain, but Johnson and Co. give the U.S. an edge over Great Britain and Jamaica.

FIELD EVENTS

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
high jump	Hollis Conway, Charles Austin, Rick Noji
pole vault	Kory Tarpenning, Scott Huffman, Tim Bright
long jump	Carl Lewis, Mike Powell, Larry Myricks
triple jump	Kenny Harrison, Mike Conley, Willie Banks
shot put	Ron Backes, David Wilson, C.J. Hunter
discus	Mike Buncic, Kamy Keshmiri, Tony Washington
hammer	Ken Flax, Lance Deal, Jud Logan
javelin	Mike Barnett, Dave Stephens, Tom Pukstys
decathlon	Dan O'Brien, Dave Johnson, Rob Muzzio

Outlook: Cuba's Javier Sotomayor, the only eight-foot jumper, is the favorite in the high jump, where Conway figures to be a factor. Sergei Bubka of the Unified Team seems unbeatable in the pole vault and could soar to the 26-foot mark again. The Unified Team could sweep that event.

The United States has a shot at 1-2-3 in the triple jump and long jump, which should be the best competition of the entire Olympics. Powell was the first to beat Bob Beamon's legendary record, and Lewis is bent on avenging that loss in what probably will be his final long jump appearance.

None of the throwing events are stocked with solid American challengers. Ron Backes in the shot put could be the best medal possibility.

The battle for gold between O'Brien and Johnson in the decathlon is much anticipated. Both are capable of a world mark, too—but they'd better not focus on each other and forget about Canada's Mike Smith, Germany's Christian Schenk, and France's Christian Plaziat.

WOMEN'S TRACK & FIELD

SPRINTS

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
100 meters	Gwen Torrence, Carlett Guidry, Esther Jones
200 meters	Gwen Torrence, Dannelle Young, Carlett Guidry
400 meters	Lili Leatherwood, Jearl Miles, Diane Dixon
100m hurdles	Gale Devers-Roberts, Dawn Bowles, Kim McKenzie
400m hurdles	Sandra Farmer-Patrick, Janeene Vickers, Kim Batten

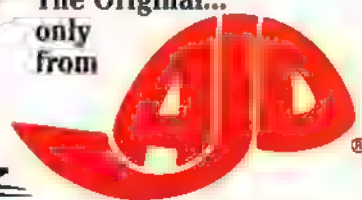
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Outlook: Germany's Katrin Krabbe's eligibility situation is so muddled that she could be banned as late as the middle of July, but if she is at Barcelona she's the one to beat in the 200. Jamaica's Marlene Ottey, despite her world championship disappointment, could win either gold, as could Torrence. Ana Quirot of Cuba, so pleasurable to watch run, will test France's Marie-Jose Perec Perez in the 400, where the Americans will be outsiders for a medal.

Devers-Roberts has a real shot at 100 hurdles gold, although the Unified Team and French will be very tough. Farmer-Patrick, Vickers, and Batten would be capable of a U.S. sweep in the 400 hurdles.

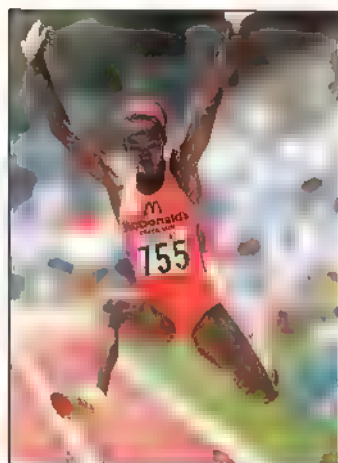
MIDDLE-DISTANCE RACES

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
800 meters	Meredith Rainey, Delisa Floyd, Joetta Clark
1,500 meters	Patti Sue Plumer, Suzy Hamilton, Shelly Steely

Outlook: Quirot all the way in the 800, with a world record possible. No U.S. medal is likely. The 1,500 should be wide open, with both Hamilton and the gritty Plumer contenders.

LONG-DISTANCE RACES

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
3,000 meters	Patti Sue Plumer, Annette Peters, Mary Slaney
10,000 meters	Francie Larrieu-Smith, Lynn Jennings, Trina Painter
10km walk	Cathy O'Brien, Francie Larrieu-Smith, Janis Klecker
	Debbie Lawrence, Victoria Herazo, Lynn Weix



Joyner-Kersey: Primed for yet another jump into history.

former Soviets and several other top contenders is too much.

RELAYS

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
4x100 meters	Gwen Torrence, Evelyn Ashford, Carlett Guidry, Esther Jones
4x400 meters	Lili Leatherwood, Jearl Miles, Maicel Malone, Diane Dixon

Outlook: American gold chances are far stronger in the 400, where sprinting depth could be the edge. The 1,600 could come down to a stretch duel between Perec and Quirot.

FIELD EVENTS

Event	Probable U.S. Competitors
high jump	Yolanda Henry, Sue Rembao, Tisha Waller
long jump	Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Sheila Echols, Carol Lewis
shot put	Connie Price-Smith, Ramona Pagel, Pam Dukes
discus	Lacy Barnes, Penny Neer, Carla Garrett
javelin	Karin Smith, Paula Berry, Donna Mayhew
heptathlon	Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Cindy Greiner, Kym Carter

Outlook: Joyner-Kersey, of course, is the best bet for American gold. The best women's athlete of the last 10 years—and maybe ever—should be co-favored with the irrepressible Heike Drechsler of Germany in the long jump. An American medal in the high jump, which the Unified Team and Heike Henkel should dominate, is unlikely for an American.

China's Huang Zhihong should edge the Unified Team representative in the shot put, while Germany has the best discus throwers. Again, no U.S. medals are expected. Smith has surprised in the javelin before, but she isn't in the class of the Germans or Scandinavians this year. ■

Ya Pays Yer Money and Ya Takes Yer Choice

Some call it a ground-breaking innovation that will change sports television. Others call it overkill, a project destined to lose at least \$100 million. One thing's for certain about NBC's pay-per-view cablecasts of the 1992 Summer Olympics, though: The idea definitely will get people talking—both about the Games and the coverage itself.

In addition to NBC's 161 hours of scheduled free coverage of the most popular Olympic sports—basketball, boxing, track and field, swimming, and gymnastics—"the Olympics TripleCast," a joint venture of NBC and Cablevision—will provide 15 days of 24-hour, commercial-free coverage on three channels: 12 hours of live coverage starting at 5 a.m. Eastern time and 12 hours of taped action beginning at 5 p.m. Eastern time. This wall-to-wall-to-wall coverage will focus mainly on 16 sports but will include some coverage of every medal sport. Nearly 300 cameras will shoot the action for NBC, including the first-ever use of cameras that follow swimmers underwater and race just ahead of the leaders during track events. Ten cameras will cover a boxing match from all angles; 39 cameras will shoot track and field events.

The three channels (appropriately called the Red, White, and Blue channels) will air complete live coverage of the most popular sports, from the opening rounds right through the medal ceremonies. There also will be plenty of coverage of the other sports that the network believes have "mass appeal."

The Red Channel will cover swimming, boxing, track and field, baseball, synchronized swimming, and cycling. The White Channel will air gymnastics, diving, equestrian events, tennis, rhythmic gymnastics, and soccer. The Blue Channel will carry basketball, volleyball, wrestling, and water polo. A subscription to the package gets you all three channels, but it will cost you—\$125 for the entire July 26-August 9 production. Some cable systems offer a single-day package at \$29.95. "It will cost you money, but we plan to give you your money's worth," says Terry Ewert, coordinating producer of NBC's coverage of the '88 Games, who is heading up the cablecasts production. Ewert has assembled a team of broadcasting veterans that includes studio hosts Don Criqui, Gayle Gardner, Ahmad Rashad, and Kathleen Sullivan. The roster of 35 commentators includes Bruce Jenner and Frank Shorter on track and field, Chick Hearn, Quinn Buckner, Jim Durham, and Steve Jones on basketball, Julianne McNamara and Peter Vidmar on gymnastics, Ferdie Pacheco on boxing, Bud Collins, Chris Evert, and Tracy Austin on tennis, Jeff Blatnick on wrestling, and John Tesh and Tracie Ruiz-Conforto on synchronized swimming.

The cablecasts production team will work in a 35,000-square foot facility in downtown Barcelona. The center of operations for the pay-per-view venture, located next to the network's broadcast facility, will house a separate studio, control room, and editing room for each channel.

NBC reportedly does not plan to turn a profit on the cablecasts, which probably is an accurate forecast because the production would need to bring in about \$400 million in gross revenues, according to some estimates, for the network to reach the break-even point. The pay-per-view record is \$48.9 million gross for last year's Evander Holyfield-George Foreman heavyweight title fight, which was sold to 1.36 million homes. NBC figures it will need at least 2.76 million homes to break even. The phones weren't exactly ringing off the hook when the Olympic pay-per-view venture was announced last spring, but network officials said they were not too concerned, citing the innovative value of the project over its gloomy financial picture. "We don't expect buying to occur on this—as is the case with all pay-per-view events—until right up until the time of the event," says NBC cable president Tom Rogers. "If we're successful it could lead to similar productions where there's a combination of over-the-air and pay-per-view on the same event." —Larry Burke



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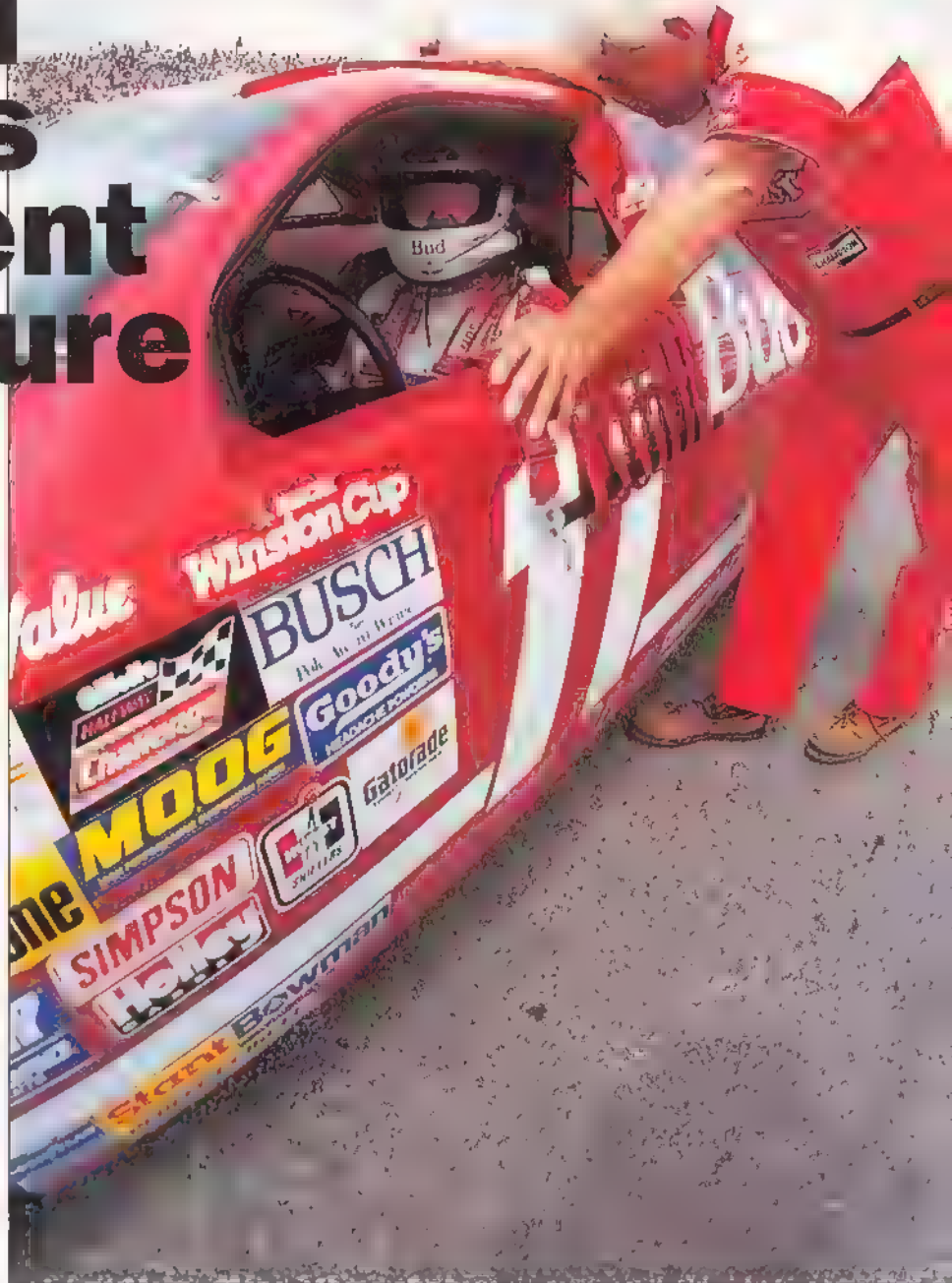
Two stock car legends, Bill Elliott and Junior Johnson, have teamed up to dominate NASCAR

BY JONATHAN INGRAM

IT HAS BEEN PRACTICALLY THREE decades since mainstream America got its first glimpse inside NASCAR racing via "The Last American Hero," a profile of Junior Johnson by Tom Wolfe in the March 1965 issue of *Esquire* magazine. Wolfe's story on Johnson was the saga of an Ingle Hollow, N.C., moonshiner-turned-stock car driver who was dedicated to surviving on his own terms, terms best symbolized by a '51 Ford he built with a Cadillac engine jammed under the hood that barreled down the highway at 190 mph—after the white whiskey was unloaded.

Fast-forward 40 years. Robert Glenn Johnson and his cars may not be blowing past federal revenue agents on state highways anymore, but they continue to dominate NASCAR ovals because Bill Elliott of Dawsonville, Ga.—"Awesome Bill from Dawsonville"—is behind the wheel. Since their first race together at the beginning of the 1992 NASCAR season, Johnson and Elliott, each a storied driver in his own right, have been working hard to create a new NASCAR Winston Cup series legend.

After the season-opening Daytona 500, their first Winston Cup race, came four straight victories for Elliott in Johnson's Fords on tracks at Rockingham, N.C., Richmond, Atlanta, and Darlington, S.C. The duo



The lumber man and the bootlegger: Racing fans just love guys who work hard.

easily might have swept the season's first five races, except that Elliott's fastest Ford literally was knocked out of the lead at Daytona as 14 cars were turned into two-ton pickup sticks by an accident at 200 mph on the backstraight. Johnson and Elliott thus started the current season with half a million dollars in earnings, way ahead of Elliott's schedule in 1985, when he earned his "Awesome" handle by winning 11 superspeedway races and \$2.4 million in one 29-event season while driving for his family-operated team in Dawsonville. If they stick together—and presently Johnson and

Elliott have a multimillion-dollar agreement with sponsors Budweiser and Amoco for three years—the thought of a NASCAR dynasty is not far-fetched.

Johnson, 60 and white-haired with flashing blue-hazel eyes, and Elliott, 36 and red-haired with searing laser-blue eyes, have much in common besides their contrariness and their ability to figure out how to beat stock car racing competitors such as Dale Earnhardt, Darrell Waltrip, and Rusty Wallace. Both are staunch individualists of the mountain man variety. Johnson, for instance, displays a backwoods sort of

boardroom genius, always figuring out ways to influence the decisions of others without necessarily letting on that he's doing it. Johnson says he likes Wolfe because he was "a unique person" but didn't help him write "The Last American Hero." "The reason I didn't help him was I wanted him to get his story, not mine," Junior says. "So I made him go out and get in the county with the people that knew me, the people that didn't like me or liked me or whatever, and get his story. He did that on his own. I gave him just facts on information, and that's about it."

Elliott also gets results, but he takes a slightly different tack. In fact, he's a virtual stick in the mud when it comes to dealing with the media. Elliott, who describes himself as shy about expressing his own thoughts, says his big year in 1985 was like "getting fed to the lions" because of the constant attention of the media, which dubbed him "Aw Shucks Bill from Dawsonville." He's one of the toughest interviews in sports; he doesn't like to talk about what makes his cars go fast, or about the dynamics of his relationships with team members, either.

"It doesn't bother me anymore," says Elliott of the increased media attention after he became the fifth driver to win four straight since the season in NASCAR's premier division was shortened from 45 races to 31 events in 1972. "I haven't got anything to prove. I do the best job I can do. If we don't win, we'll figure out what we did wrong and come back and try again the next time."

Johnson and Elliott are alike in another way. Their popularity among racing fans comes from their total dominance and the perception that they are men of the people who work hard for a living at a heroic endeavor on superspeedways bigger and louder than life, where there is the nonstop pressure of beating 30 other racing teams

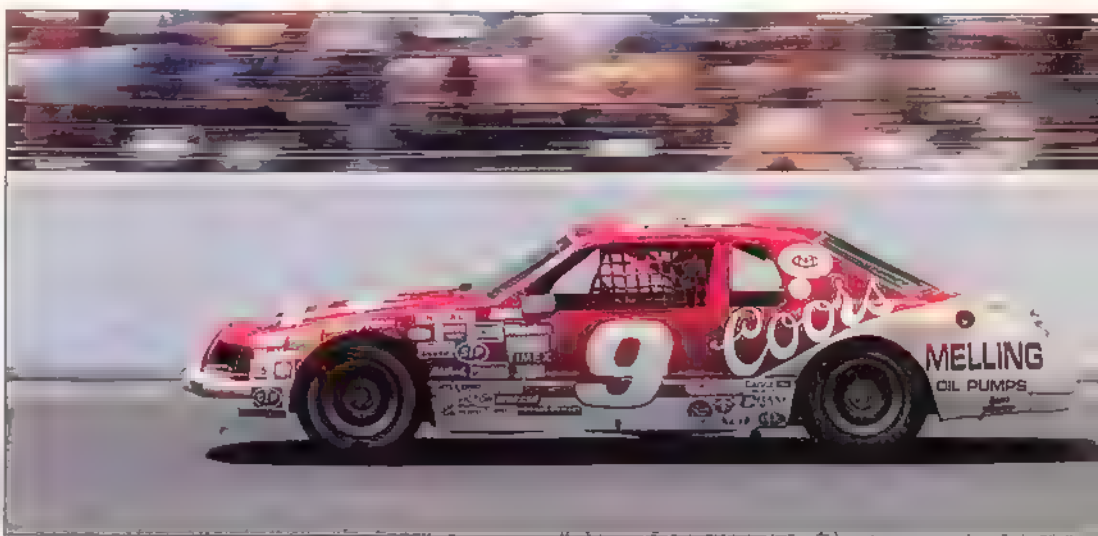
from week to week. To the uninitiated, driving a car wouldn't seem to require an extraordinary physical effort, but wrestling a 3,500-pound machine on the edge of control—where the speed is sweetest—takes a tremendous toll over 500 miles.

Working hard and dangerously for a living is almost routine for Elliott and Johnson. Both are from poor little hamlets where—as in much of rural America, particularly the South—cars were seen as the ultimate social statement. To own one meant economic opportunity and, above all, freedom to roam. To build and drive a fast vehicle increased its attraction and social value exponentially. And to carry white whiskey illegally past revenue agents made capable cars extremely profitable. Ultimately, fast cars became the means to compare one man against another with concrete results, which remains the core appeal of stock car racing.

seems, had a slower car. Finally apprehended at the family still, Johnson spent 10 months in the federal penitentiary at Chillicothe, Ohio, leaving in 1955. Thirty years and some 120 major NASCAR race victories later as a car owner, Junior received a full pardon from President Ronald Reagan.

Johnson's first race took place up the road from his family's Ingle Hollow farm at the North Wilkesboro track long before he served time. "My brother had a pretty fast whiskey car, and he wanted to come to North Wilkesboro [Speedway] to drive it," Johnson says. "So I was in the field plowing behind a mule—barefooted, overalls, no shirt on—and he drives up down close to the field where I was at and says, 'I want you to go to North Wilkesboro and drive my car in the race.' And I said, 'Let me get my shirt and shoes and I'll be ready.'"

Elliott, on the other hand, served his apprenticeship high-balling lumber at breakneck speeds to Atlanta for his father.



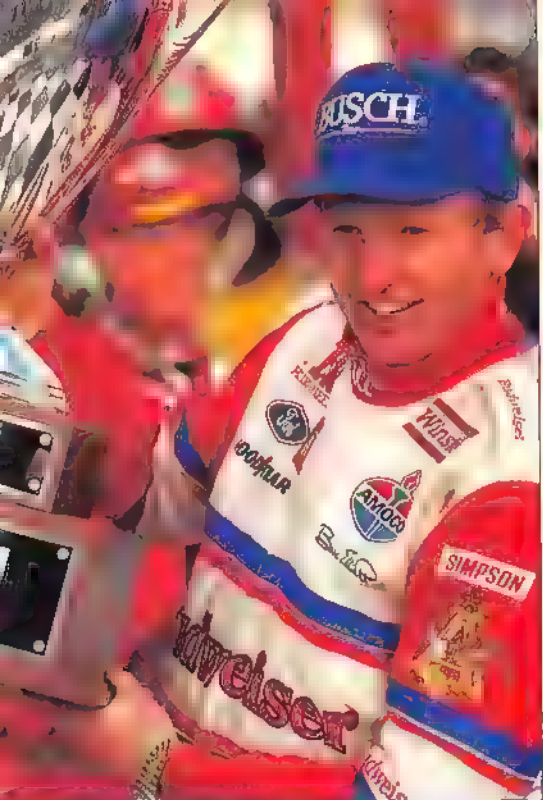
Free of the distractions of management, Elliott can do what he does best: drive.

Johnson, whose cars have earned \$16 million in NASCAR racing since he retired from driving in 1966, perfected mechanical one-upmanship in his battles with the federal revenue agents who chased him while he hauled moonshine from his father's still—which, he says, the family maintained as a matter of survival. Johnson admits to being a cocky SOB when he bootlegged whiskey, actually seeking out the revenue agents at times to prove who had the stronger car. "I had a car that run so fast on a straight road that it looked like it was two foot wide, on down the road, you know," says Johnson in his throaty mountain drawl. "I never had nothing like that on the race track."

Federal agents never did catch him on the road—not even after they hired famed race-car driver (and bootlegger in his own right) Curtis Turner to chase him. Turner, it

George Elliott received an Ivy League education, courtesy of the U.S. Navy, during World War II. He ran a successful building supplies business and a car dealership, and also did well in real estate. Elliott's father did not have to rely on distilling corn liquor to raise his three sons in Dawson County, where one of its most famous sons, racer Lloyd Seay, was killed in a dispute over sugar—a crucial ingredient in moonshine.

(The entire county, it seems, is as contrary as Elliott in an interview. Furman Bisher, the sports columnist for *The Atlanta Journal*, tells the story of driving up to interview Elliott one day and getting lost. "I stopped in front of a house where an old codger was rocking on the porch," Bisher says. "I shouted, 'Hey neighbor, how do you get to Dawsonville from here?' He spit some tobacco and replied, 'I usually have my brother drive me.'")



No pressure: Elliott says that now he 'doesn't have anything to prove.'

Changing times have long since curtailed the white whiskey trade in Dawson, and the increase in traffic and population in the county, which sits 50 miles north of Atlanta in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, has curtailed the racing on the roads. In the 1950s that meant five or six guys jumping into their cars and racing flat-out to Gainesville and back again on a two-lane blacktop bordered by ditches. When brothers Bill, Ernie, and Dan Elliott grew up in the 1960s, it meant driving the 13 miles from Dahlonega to Dawsonville in less than 10 minutes. In Dawsonville they still talk about the time Dan spun a Mustang overlaid with a monstrous 427 Ford engine at a bend just outside of town and slid 700 feet.

Even when the Elliotts were working for father George's lumber company, they were racing. They maintained the engines and drove the trucks that hauled the lumber to a booming Atlanta as fast as moonshiners on a midnight run. "They had trucks with 350 and 427 Ford engines," says one Dawson County resident between bites of a grilled cheese sandwich at the Dawsonville Pool Room. "They could barely make it to Atlanta and back on 50 gallons of fuel, and that's a 100-mile round trip. Some of those trucks were clocked at 90 mph with a full load of lumber."

The Elliotts' version of North Wilkesboro Speedway was a three-eighths-mile oval on the northern rim of Atlanta known as Dixie Speedway. A lifelong fan and race-car owner, George Elliott encouraged his sons to go racing, thinking organized competi-

tion safer than their wood-truck runs to Atlanta. He eventually bought them a complete set of racing equipment from Roger Penske, who closed his NASCAR shop in 1977 to concentrate on Indy cars. By 1982 the sport required so much money that Ernie and Bill Elliott struck a deal with Michigan businessman and racing enthusiast Harry Melling to buy the team from their father, and with the proper backing and literal around-the-clock work (due to a half-size team of 12 crew members, including themselves) the Elliotts emerged in 1985 with their "awesome" season, and another small-town boy had suddenly hit the big time in NASCAR.

The Elliotts won 25 races from 1985 to '88 and the 1988 Winston Cup championship because they were more innovative with the Ford Thunderbird chassis than their competitors. Johnson points out that the Thunderbird was a better race car because it was smaller than the Chevrolets, which meant it had less aerodynamic drag on the straightaways. At the time Johnson raced Chevys, but he switched his team to Fords in 1989 because of his conclusion that the body style would work better than the Chevys—and because it was mandatory to have Fords to convince Elliott to drive for him.

While free agency is a late arrival in other major league sports, it has been a mainstay in stock car racing, where allegiances between sponsors, manufacturers, car owners, and drivers constantly shift in the search for the right combination. When Elliott's team posted two straight poor seasons, Coors Beer, its sponsor for eight years, turned down Melling's request for more money for the 1992 season. Elliott, meanwhile, had tired of running the team, along with engine-building brother Ernie. Their record in 1990 and '91 was an unremarkable two victories as they competed against teams with more money and drivers who were paid simply to show up, test cars, and compete in races.

"For people who have never managed people, we had about 30 full-time employees and another half-dozen part-time," says Bill. "To keep them traveling, working, happy, and motivated for 31 weeks—I dare anyone who thinks it's easy to try it."

In addition, Elliott's 1990 divorce from Martha, his wife of 14 years, put more strain than usual on his relationship with Ernie, who did not approve of what he saw as Bill's response to his increased notoriety. The brothers agreed it would be better to go their separate ways to sustain their own competitive careers and personal relationship. When Bill departed for Johnson's stable, Ernie Elliott switched to building V-8s

for the Ford team owned by Kenny Bernstein.

Another conflict for Bill Elliott had been the increasing pressure to make personal appearances for sponsors while trying to run the racing team and keep it competitive. With the switch to Johnson's team in Ingle Hollow, Elliott found a fleet of prepared cars waiting for him, his own crew chief to make sure car preparation is properly executed, and a hands-on team owner. All Elliott has to do between appearances for Budweiser is concentrate on what he does best: drive.

Johnson's team (which has included a second Ford fielded for Sterling Marlin and Maxwell House sponsorship since 1990) has equipment, a staff, and shops second to none in NASCAR. Sixty employees are engaged in race preparations, in the engine department alone, 15 people are employed to build, research, and develop the 358 V-8s used in the Winston Cup.

However, Johnson's Budweiser-backed cars had floundered since Darrell Waltrip departed after the 1986 season, with Terry Labonte driving until 1989 and Geoff Bodine after that. The pair had combined to win six championships and 101 races with Waltrip and Cale Yarborough from 1973 to 1986, but the chemistry was not right between Johnson and Labonte, who grew up in Corpus Christi, Texas, or Bodine, from upstate New York. Johnson ended up with these drivers when Elliott remained committed to the Melling Racing team after Waltrip left. Those two were the best remaining choices (in part because Budweiser approved them because they already had won races for other teams), but Labonte and Bodine simply didn't mesh with Johnson or his crew chief, Tim Brewer. In a sport that depends on how a car's chassis is working, communication is paramount. Otherwise there is the constant question of whether a problem is mechanical—or behind the wheel in the driver's seat.

From 1985 on there never was much doubt that Elliott was a seminal talent behind the wheel—one who could seize the moment of speed and always make it work to his advantage, who could get around the oval tracks ahead of the next guy because of his sensitive touch and vast understanding of what made a car go. Nowadays Johnson is providing the horsepower and the cars to Awesome Bill, who is concentrating on knifing through the competition like a bootlegger being chased by federal agents or a boy hauling lumber out of the hills for his daddy, in a job where time and speed are money. ■

Free-lance journalist JONATHAN INGRAM works out of Atlanta, but he felt right at home in the Dawsonville Pool Room. This is Jonathan's first assignment for I.S.



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Despite his mammoth homers and proven clutch hitting, Kevin Mitchell is with his fourth team in six years. Can the reason be found in his flat, uncompromising stare, or in the turmoil of his private life?

"It's people that put that attitude on me, that I'm a bad guy...I don't have a temper. You never see me get thrown out of a game. I never argue, I never holler at people."

THERE IS LITTLE about Seattle that seems like home to Kevin Mitchell. He's playing indoors, the Pacific Northwest weather is nothing like that of his San Diego childhood, and nobody's about to mistake the scenery of Puget Sound for the rough and tumble section of Compton where Mitchell grew up. Only the whispers remain the same.

Kevin Mitchell knows that four teams in six years is a lot, and four teams in six years for the player who hit more home runs than anyone else between 1989 and '91 is too many. It smacks of hidden reasons, undesirable tendencies, a troublemaker. It causes Kevin Mitchell to be perceived as a mercenary ballplayer, which is a label he never sought but one he can live with.

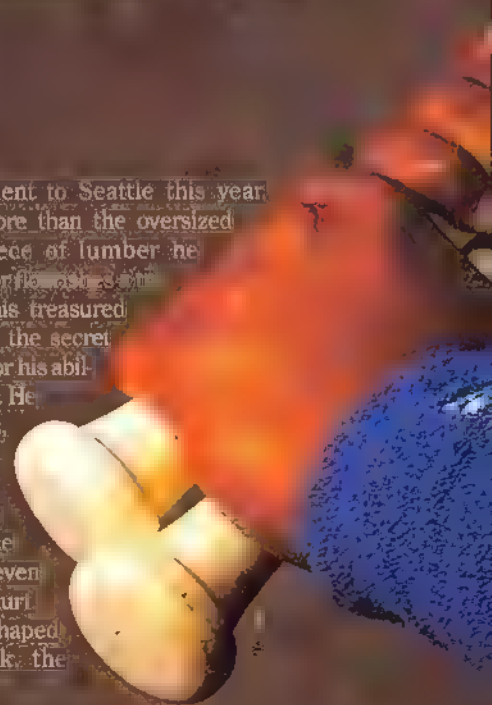
Mitchell brought more than his undeniable slugging

By PETER KORN

talent to Seattle this year, more than the oversized piece of lumber he

wields the way a conductor flourishes his mallet, more than his treasured custom-made whistle bat, the secret weapon Mitchell credits for his ability to hit breaking pitches. He also brought a reputation, one that surrounds him like a San Francisco fog, one that preceded him into Seattle and made him a suspect before he even set foot on the Kingdome turf.

There is a crescent-shaped scar on Mitchell's back, the





result of a shotgun blast, and similar scars on his wrist and leg. There are also wounds in his heart. Mitchell's stepbrother was killed in a gang fight. His father re-entered his life recently, having left home when Mitchell was two; this winter Mitchell helped place his father in a drug rehab center.

In the posh San Diego suburb of East Lake, about 20 minutes away from Mitchell's old neighborhood, stands the ballplayer's new home, complete with batting cage and four Rottweilers on three isolating acres. It signifies that Mitchell has left the neighborhood, and yet at the same time he hasn't moved away at all.

The new home could be in San Francisco or Seattle, but it's not. It's in San Diego. The

they're my friends. And then my name gets noticed, and once my name gets on the scanner then here come the reporters."

Mitchell does not run well. His wrist and knee will attest to that—he injured both on the basepaths—and so will his heart. He will not be chased out of a clubhouse or a city, and he will not look back once he has left a team. And he will never, ever, leave his neighborhood. "Everywhere you go in this world there's trouble," Mitchell says. "I've got family there, and I'm not leaving my family for nobody."

Mitchell has not always been at home in a major league clubhouse. Maybe that's because he never wanted to be there in the first place.

was an accident. Roger Jongewaard, then a Mets scout and now a Mariners VP, was conducting a tryout for Keith Mitchell (now in the Braves organization), who asked if he could bring along his 18-year-old cousin, Kevin. Jongewaard consented and arranged a weekend pickup game to watch the players. "[Kevin] was a very, very crude baseball player, but you could tell he could hit the ball," Jongewaard says. "He had absolutely no fear at the plate, and he rarely swung and missed." The Mets signed the young slugger immediately.

In New York the young Mitchell, who was considerably lighter than he is today, was approached by the legendary Willie Mays, who gave the ballplayer a heavier bat. Mays also forged a relationship with the quiet young man that remains one of the strongest Mitchell has known. "He came up to me and said, 'You remind me of me when I was younger. The ball just sounds different off your bat,'" Mitchell recalls with fondness.

The Mets played Mitchell at six different positions in his rookie year. He hit .277 with 12 home runs, finished third in rookie of the year balloting, and was immediately traded to San Diego in a deal for Kevin McReynolds. No problem. Mitchell was coming home. However, home only lasted 62 games before Mitchell was dealt to the Giants, in a swap of enigmatic players. The Padres received third baseman Chris Brown, who was searching for a reputation worthy of his enormous potential, while Mitchell was being saddled with a rep that grew against his will.

"[The Padres] told me that I'd be here for the next 10 years," Mitchell recalls. "They weren't worried about winning; we had a young team." Then Larry Bowa, the Padres manager at the time, chose to platoon Mitchell at third with Randy Ready, and what could have been Mitchell's dream year, at home in front of family and friends, in front of the neighborhood, became a year of frustration and embarrassment. Still, when word came of the trade to San Francisco, he nearly quit the game, only to be talked out of it by Dave Dravecky.

Despite his misgivings, it didn't take Mitchell long to shine in San Francisco. In fact, Mitchell's 1989 season, his second full one with the Giants, he hit 47 homers and drove home 125 runs, capturing the National League MVP award. And yet, the good feelings created by that production and the 1989 pennant did not last. The synergy produced by having Mitchell, Will Clark, and Matt Williams in the lineup did not carry over to the locker room.

San Francisco was the scene of Mitchell's greatest triumphs, but it also became the place where the whispers found voice. His



Despite his numbers, Mitchell can't outrun his reputation as a troublemaker.

neighborhood refuses to leave Kevin Mitchell.

Last winter Mitchell made headlines after a fight broke out in a San Diego tavern. "I walked in a club for two minutes, and a fight broke out where I wasn't even involved," he says. "I know everybody in San Diego. I grew up with a lot of people;

He never idolized ballplayers when he was young, didn't model his swing after another's. Mitchell didn't even bother to play high school baseball, though he did participate in a 16-and-under league in which he was given \$20 for every home run he hit. That, he says, was inspiration.

Even the major leagues' discovery of him

off-field troubles mounted. He was arrested for assaulting a woman, an ex-girlfriend. Charges were dropped when Mitchell agreed to counseling; Mitchell says he argued with the woman but it was someone else who beat her up. Last December Mitchell was arrested on rape charges, which were later dismissed. The outfielder says the woman was another ex-girlfriend and the rape never occurred. Last season Mitchell allegedly was chauffeured to Candlestick Park by a friend who may have taken part in the killing of a San Diego policeman.

The Giants locker room was not a refuge. It may simply have been too loud. "I'm not a cheerleader," Mitchell says. "I'm a quiet guy. I like getting out on the field, but I don't get excited about doing things. I get the job done and do it; I don't try to be pretty about things. My swing is not pretty. It's not a Will Clark swing. I just try to get the job done and get it over with. I may not be pretty about it but I get it done."

The obvious implied contrast is with Clark, the good ol' boy from New Orleans, boisterous and ever-flamboyant. Mitchell more than matched Clark for home runs and RBIs but couldn't come close to matching "Will the Thrill" in charisma. Mitchell

**'I don't like all
the publicity. People
say I don't like talking,
but it ain't that. I don't
like things to get
mixed up, to be said
wrong.
I don't like to be
noticed.'**

was quiet—and everyone was aware of his quiet, as if it meant something. "Mitch intimidated a lot of guys," says former Giants teammate Willie McGee.

Mitchell set his own timetable and his own tone in the Giants clubhouse. A visit to that locker room illustrated the fundamental conflict: Often there was noise and typical chatter—but in its midst, stone quiet and

oblivious, was Mitchell, neither above nor beneath the atmosphere, just not a part of it.

"I was always quiet and laid-back," Mitchell says. "I never get loud. I hold a lot of things in; I never let it out, I don't tell anybody anything. Like '89, when I won the MVP—that's something, [but when] I started thinking about it I wished I'd never won it. I'm the type of person, I like to be like a James Worthy, the one who gets the job done. You look at the newspaper, wow, he's got 39 points.

"It's being the laid-back guy, the guy behind. I don't like all the publicity—give it to the other guy. People say I don't like talking, but it ain't that. I don't like things to get mixed up, to be said wrong.

"I don't like to be noticed."

It is true that Mitchell has not sought notoriety or its benefits. He has not put his public image front and center in search of riches. He has not traded his privacy for million-dollar endorsements. Mitchell's freedom was taken away from him without his consent, though that doesn't mean he is without responsibility. His name has appeared, not in ads, but on front pages.

However, it's only partially true that



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Mitchell shies away from notice. Attention on the field motivates Mitchell, and it always has. "Just being looked at by thousands of people, like you're in a zoo and they're waiting for you to do something exciting," he says. "And they'll let you know. That's why I loved it so much playing in New York. They made you play. If you didn't play and they knew you were talented, they'd get it out of you."

The crowd isn't such a motivating force in Seattle. There, Mitchell has had to rely on inanimate objects to inspire him, and there are three of them that stand 331,405, and 312 feet away, respectively: the fences that surround the cozy Kingdome outfield. Early in the season they weren't enough. The 40 or 50 home runs Mitchell might have produced in a hitter's paradise became only a dream. While Oakland's Mark McGwire and a handful of other AL sluggers played home

KEVIN MITCHELL

run derby, Mitchell struggled through a dismal first month in his new league.

Six weeks into the season, Mitchell had only hit a pair of dingers. To make matters worse—in fact, to push them to the point of embarrassment—Bill Swift, one of three pitchers the Mariners sent to San Francisco to acquire Mitchell, had a 6-0 record and was surrendering less than one earned run per outing. The Giants, predicted by many to fall out of the pennant race by Memorial Day, vaulted to the forefront of their division. Meanwhile, the Mariners, who finished with their first .500 season in their history in '91, were dangerously close to digging themselves a hole alongside the woeful Kansas City Royals in the dungeon of the AL West. Ironically, though, there has been little talk of Mitchell as a disruptive force on the team.

That was never the case with the Giants.



The bat's been quiet in Seattle, but so has the clubhouse atmosphere.

Mitchell has bitter memories of his years in San Francisco. "If I don't say nothing then I'm a hard guy to get along with, and if I do speak out I've got an attitude," he says. "So you're in the middle of everything. Which way should I go?"

"It was the same with the Mets. That year, in '86, all I wanted was to focus on making the team. I wouldn't say anything to anybody. I sat at my locker with my earphones on and they'd say, 'There you go, you've got an attitude, you don't want to talk.' I'm out there trying to make a team, and that's all I'm thinking about. It's just like a boxer. What is he thinking of doing? He's thinking

**'I know
everybody in San
Diego. They're my
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here come the
reporters.'**

of winning. He don't want to go in there and get his head knocked off."

Mitchell's boxing analogy is appropriate. In the Giants locker room Mitchell often looked like a boxer before a fight, keeping to himself but too massive to ignore. Is he angry, surly, about to explode? He doesn't fit into a baseball clubhouse easily.

As evidence of his benign intentions Mitchell emphasizes the fact that he never was involved in a locker room fight in San Francisco, although others seem to have been worried about the fights that might occur. "It's people that put that attitude on me, that I'm a troublemaker, that I've got an attitude, that I'm a bad guy," he says. "I don't know who brought that up. That's the image that people gave me, that I've got a temper. I don't have a temper. You've never seen me get thrown out of a game. I never argue, I never holler at people."

"He's got a legitimate gripe," says McGee. "All Mitch wanted was respect. Everything he heard was second-hand. Instead of being scared that he would punch someone out, if [the Giants front office] would have taken

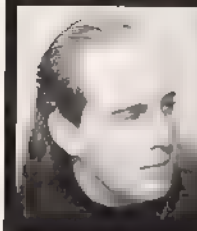
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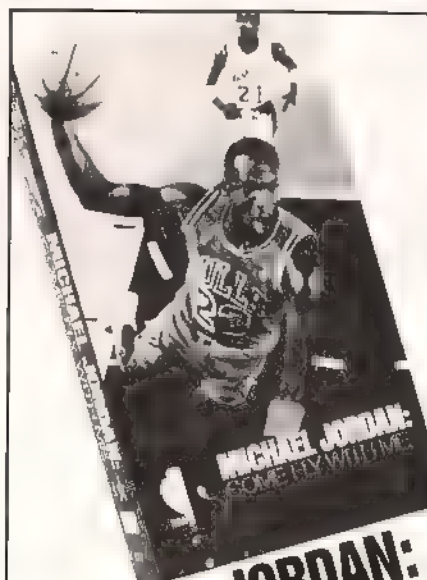
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him aside and said, 'Mitch, this is what we need,' he would have respected that."

McGee says Mitchell's habit of tardiness for team stretching exercises didn't bother him, but he admits some other team members did care. "We would have been a better team if we had been concerned with our jobs as players," he says. "When you're losing you notice all these things, but when you win it doesn't matter. Mitch was made the fall guy; he destroyed the whole clubhouse is what they're saying. If we had won last year none of that would have been noticed."

Mitchell cannot hide in a locker room. "He's different," McGee observes. "He's big and he's intimidating. When he comes into the clubhouse it's like whoooo. Things slow down." Whether Mitchell wants it or not, whether it's his physique or manner or the glowering look on his face, he has presence. "When he

game.' He sits here and he asks me, 'Why is this game so easy, Mitch?' And I look at him, and I just laugh and say, 'Man, you must not be human.' But like I told him—he was slumping a little bit—'Man, work your own way out of it. That's the only way you're going to be the best.' You learn something every day about this game. It's a mind game; you take control of it yourself."

Mitchell's strength often has been mistaken for anger, his desire for solitude taken for sullenness, but the only intimidating he intended was on the field. "I always thought that was part of the game, intimidation," he says. "[Former Giants teammate] Mike Krukow said when I first faced him—I was with the Mets and pinch-hit—he said I intimidated him. How? When I went up to the plate, the way I swung the bat. Everything I swung at, I swung the bat hard, and in the back of his mind he said, 'Hey, I don't want to throw him that pitch no more.'"

private talks over the years. In the end, a variety of reasons told Rosen it was time to move Mitchell on, a move he hoped never to make.

"Kevin Mitchell is a terrific guy," Rosen says. "He comes from a background that neither you nor I can understand. We read about it and we try to empathize, but we don't understand it. He can't change because his background doesn't allow him to change. He doesn't have some of the equipment to change."

Rosen almost sounds like a frustrated father. Clearly he cares about Mitchell, but he reached a point where he knew he couldn't do anything about it. "He can't help himself," Rosen says. "He's more comfortable with his friends."

"His friends do not have his best interests at heart, but you can't tell Kevin that because he can't accept that. I told Kevin three years ago, 'Kevin, let's do you a big

favor. Let's get you a home up here in the North Bay.' He said, 'Yes, you're right, Mr. Rosen. Maybe I should do that.' But he couldn't help but buy a home in his old neighborhood."

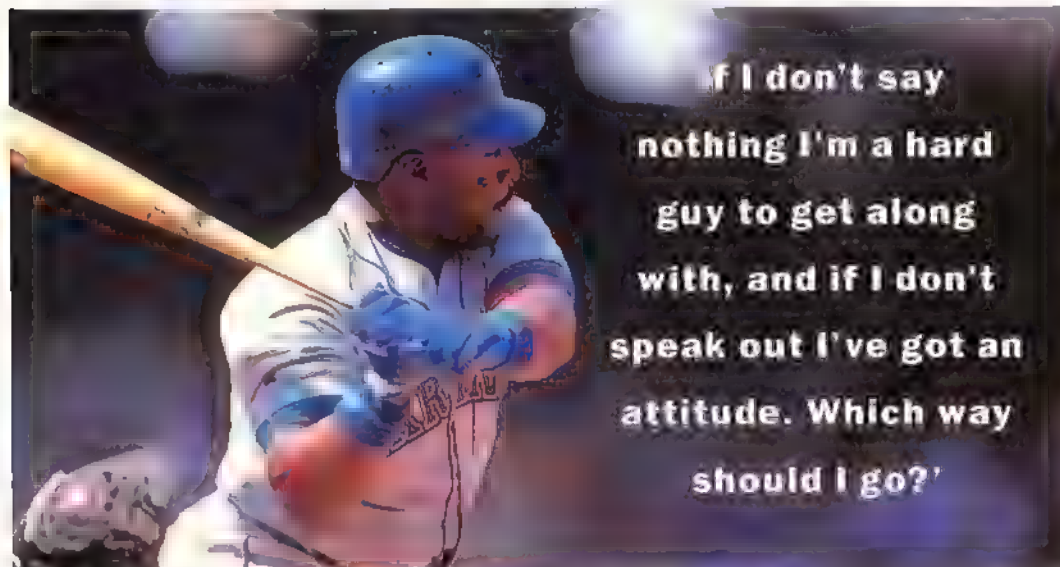
"It's too bad because there's not a mean bone in Kevin's body. He doesn't mean anybody any harm. But trouble follows him. If trouble were looking for an heir he'd be it."

"He's got an entourage." Rosen shakes his head. "He's falling into the same trap as Mike Tyson, the same trap as some of these other poor guys that just

can't seem to extricate themselves from their past."

About Rosen, Mitchell only says the GM was smart enough to trade him to an American League team. "I can't hurt him," says the slugger. However, Rosen insists Mitchell was not traded solely because of his behavior off the field, even though the trade to Seattle occurred two weeks after the rape charge. "I saw production going down, I saw age [30] and weight going up," he says.

"Some of Kevin's off-field activities were disruptive to the club and some of his on-the-field activities, such as not stretching with the club, were incendiary to some of the players, but those are not the reasons to trade a player. If a player hits 47 home runs and knocks in 125 runs and helps you win a championship you put up with that, but when a player now doesn't do those things you have a problem that you can exacerbate



put on his uniform and walked to the plate he was leading," McGee says. "Very few players have that." Mitchell has it and doesn't want it. He doesn't want to lead or be led.

"I feel we're grown men," Mitchell says. "We've got families. Be your own boss, be your own leader. Lead yourself. If everybody does their part out on the field and away from the field, how can you lose? If you do the little things that help you win games, what more do you want? As long as you work."

"I was always brought up to take care of myself. You're over 18 years old. Be your own leader now. You're not with mommy and daddy anymore."

"I respect everybody in baseball," Mitchell says. "I told Griffey [Ken Griffey Jr.], 'I respect you a lot. You can listen or not. You don't have to. I may be older than you but I respect you, man. You can play this

"That helped me out a lot, because when he told me that I started doing it more often. If I know I can't hit a pitch I'll take a vicious cut at it. In the back of his mind he'll say, 'I don't want to throw that pitch no more,' and he'll throw me something else. It's just like playing games. Play with his mind, you know. That's all it is, is a mind game."

The intimidation game has its dark side, too. Mitchell, his stance close to the plate virtually daring the pitcher to come inside, was hit by pitched balls three games in a row last season. He claims Giants pitchers never protected him by retaliating. "Pitchers try to do the same thing," he says. "They try to intimidate you."

Al Rosen, the Giants general manager and the man who traded for the slugger and four seasons later decided to deal him away, took a personal interest in Mitchell. The two engaged in a number of

or you can address." What's remarkable about that statement is how closely it echoes Mitchell's: Bad chemistry is for losers.

"[Jose] Canseco is no bed of roses for Tony La Russa, but he performs," Rosen says. "Rickey Henderson is no bed of roses, but he performs. Once you stop performing, then you have to take another look at it."

"It's like anything else. You buy a new car and the car runs great and all of a sudden at the end of 30,000 miles the car begins to give you this kind of problem and that. You say to yourself, 'Look, can I do better with a new car, or should I stay with this one and try to fix it up?' Sometimes you can't do it."

Mitchell's production has fallen off since his banner 1989 season, mostly because knee and wrist problems have kept him out of games. His home run production has fallen from 47 to 35 to 27, but his ratio of home runs to at-bats has hardly diminished. Just don't count Mitchell out. "I'm a strong person," he says. "I was always strong."

"Brett Butler told me something in '89. He said, 'Mitch, you strike out six times, and when you go back you don't do nothing, you don't tear up nothing. How do you hold yourself, control yourself?' Man, it's because I know this guy didn't get me out; I got myself out."

"I never show a pitcher 'Hey, you got me out,' because he's going to keep throwing that pitch. But he's going to make a mistake. I'll get him when it really counts."

Kevin Mitchell has suffered at the hands of others, and he has dealt out some punishment of his own. He has won an MVP award he now regrets. To him, it seems as if the lords of baseball have conspired to send him further and further from his San Diego home, first north to San Francisco and now to alien Seattle. However, Mitchell still struggles along, keeping to himself most of the time. He's a mystery to those around him, but a dynamic one. The plot doesn't revolve around who done it so much as what he's going to do next. For his part, Mitchell doesn't think he's much of a mystery at all.

"I remember this lady walked up to me and said, 'Why are you always frowning?' I said, 'I'm not frowning. I'm just in the game, and that's just my facial expression. It looks like I'm always mad, but I'm not.'"

"My girlfriend tells me, 'You look like you're mad all the time when you come home.' I'm not mad. I got nothing to be mad about. I'm alive and I'm healthy, and I'll tell you what: It's just good to be here." ■

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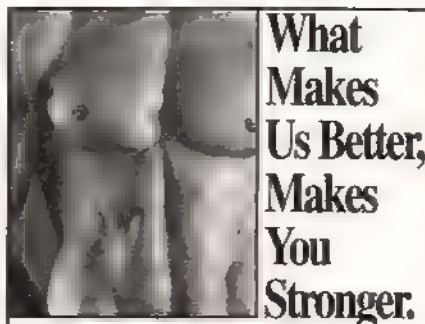
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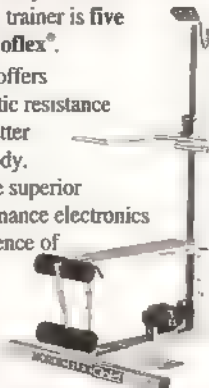
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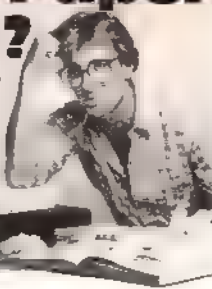
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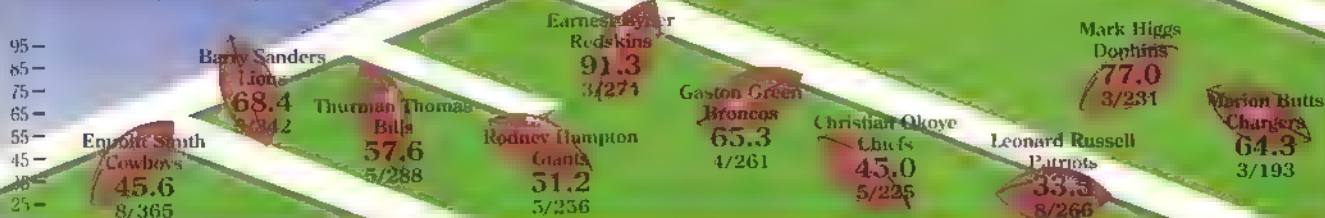
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NUMBERS

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Last season Earnest Byner wasn't given the ball as often as some NFL running backs, but when he got to be kept a Byner fumbled only three times in 274 carries, a rate of once every 91.3 attempts. Here are the top 10 NFL rushes for 1991 and their fumble rates.



DOWN TO THE WIRE

For just the second time since 1975, at least half of the regular-season NFL games played last season were decided by seven points or less. Here are the season-by-season percentages of those tightly played contests.

Year	Games	Pct.
1975	62 of 182	34.1
1976	73 of 196	37.2
1977	85 of 196	43.4
1978	108 of 224	48.2
1979	104 of 224	46.4
1980	108 of 224	48.2
1981	91 of 224	40.6
1982	61 of 126	48.4
1983	106 of 224	47.3
1984	95 of 224	42.4
1985	87 of 224	38.8
1986	106 of 224	47.3
1987	99 of 210	47.1
1988	113 of 224	50.4
1989	107 of 224	47.8
1990	97 of 224	43.3
1991	112 of 224	50.0

Source: NFL

POWER OUTAGE

A look at the major league home run champions of the last decade reveals that most had a difficult time sustaining their success. Only one, Atlanta's Dale Murphy in 1984, was able to follow his winning production with even better numbers the next year. Listed are the home run kings from 1982 to '90 and their totals in the season following their respective titles:

Seas.	(League)	Player, Team	Next HRs Year	Diff.
1982	(AL)	Reggie Jackson, Angels	39	14 -25
	(AL)	Gorman Thomas, Brewers	39	22 -17
	(NL)	Dave Kingman, Mets	37	13 -24
1983	(AL)	Jim Rice, Red Sox	39	28 -11
	(NL)	Mike Schmidt, Phillies	40	36 -4
1984	(AL)	Tony Armas, Red Sox	43	23 -20
	(NL)	Dale Murphy, Braves	36	37 +1
	(NL)	Mike Schmidt, Phillies	36	33 -3
1985	(AL)	Darrell Evans, Tigers	40	29 -11
	(NL)	Dale Murphy, Braves	37	29 -8
1986	(AL)	Jesse Barfield, Blue Jays	40	28 -12
	(NL)	Mike Schmidt, Phillies	37	35 -2
1987	(AL)	Mark McGwire, A's	49	32 -17
	(NL)	Andre Dawson, Cubs	49	24 -25
1988	(AL)	Jose Canseco, A's	42	17 -25
	(NL)	Darryl Strawberry, Mets	39	29 -10
1989	(AL)	Fred McGriff, Blue Jays	36	35 -1
	(NL)	Kevin Mitchell, Giants	47	35 -12
1990	(AL)	Cecil Fielder, Tigers	51	44 -7
	(NL)	Ryne Sandberg, Cubs	40	26 -14

DIAMOND DEFENDERS

The Gold Glove awards were instituted in 1957 to honor the major leagues' best fielders. Here are the all-time and active leaders at each position. (The outfielders listed are the best outfielders, regardless of position.)

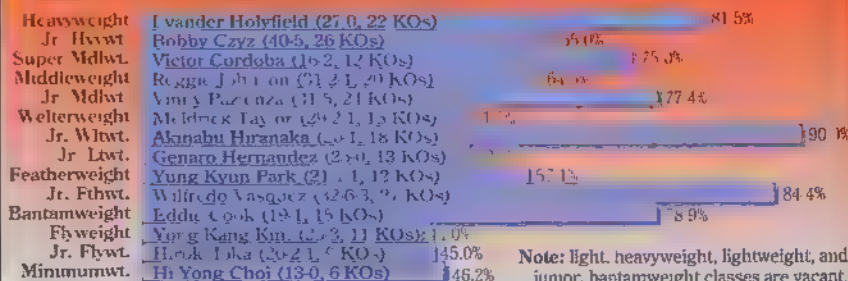


Note: All-time league team was in (AL) or (NL) and separate teams for the American and National leagues were named for all subsequent years.

□ All-time
□ Active

STREAMS OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS

Who's your favorite unconscious fighter? In the past decade, victories by knockout for the champions of each of the WBA's eight divisions (records through May 15):



Note: light, heavyweight, lightweight, and junior, bantamweight classes are vacant



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THE GOOD DOCTOR

So many young baseball players in the majors have absolutely no idea of the game's history. Have you run across any recent examples?

T.W., HARTFORD, CONN.

Have I. The other day I spoke to a big-league second baseman who thought that Joe DiMaggio was Mrs. Robinson's first husband. On the same day I had a left fielder tell me that he was certain Pee Wee Reese had his own Saturday morning kids' show inside a playhouse.

Ernst Harwell, then Tiger Stadium—what do these Detroit baseball people intend to get rid of next?

A.G., SAGINAW, MICH.

The current Tigers uniforms will be replaced in 1993 by a Bo Schembechler design featuring striped helmets and maize pants. Sparky Anderson will be replaced as manager by Gary Moeller. "Buy me some pizza and Cracker Jack" will be sung and played by an organist during 7th-inning stretches by order of team owner Tom Managhan. The club will be renamed the Michigan Tigers. And all rookies will be asked to redshirt.

Why were those basketball players in that hot tub with that gambler?

N.R., COTTONWOOD, ARIZ.

Well, you know what Tark the Shark says: "Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the water..."

Why does French Open tennis champion Jim Courier wear that baseball cap whenever he plays?

A.A., CORTLAND, N.Y.

No. 1, because there is no such thing as a tennis cap. No. 2, because he keeps tennis balls under it. And No. 3, because it was a gift from that same guy who also sends stuff to Steffi Graf.

Acouple of years ago, when he drove a car sponsored by Domino's Pizza, Arie Luyendyk won the Indianapolis 500. Do you recall his winning time?

M.A., NAZARETH, PA.

Just under 30 minutes.

Imagine be nuts, but I really thought that the first season of the WLAF provided some of the finest football this country has ever seen.

T.S., DALLAS

You were right the first time.

Pro football experts who picked Pittsburgh to win the AFC Central have been saying the Steelers have a trio of game-breaking offensive players as well as one of the NFL's best young quarterbacks. Are you familiar with them?

T.B., ERIE, PA.

Not completely. I think they're called "Three Men and a Bubby."

Traveling as much as you do to watch sporting events, Doc, which athletes do you find the friendliest?

D.K., TOLEDO

The retired ones.

What perfect casting: John Goodman as Babe Ruth. Did anyone involved with the movie ever give any consideration to giving Roseanne Barr Arnold a part in the film?

W.A., THE BRONX

Roseanne reportedly refused a key role as the Yankee Stadium hitting backdrop.

While I've always had trouble with people ignoring me, I finally managed to get into a lively argument with a guy who says that Rogers Hornsby was the greatest second baseman who ever lived. I say Ryne Sandberg. What do you say?

G.C., MESA, ARIZ.

I say: "Next question." Get a life.

Being a woman who's proud of her body, I was angered last summer that so many beaches outlawed thong swimsuits, which supposedly revealed too much skin. It's an outrage. I don't own one of these suits, but now I want one just to show people that we still have the right in this country to express ourselves. Where can I get one?

E.M., ALBANY, N.Y.

Try Thong Kong.

People have been talking about a diver from the Soviet Union who's supposed to be a lock for a gold medal at the Olympic Games in Barcelona. Who is he?

G.L., SARASOTA, FLA.

Yesim Yumpinoff.

Afew months ago, Colorado's football coach came out publicly against gays. Do you think he went too far?

O.X., VERNAL, UTAH

Absolutely—especially now that he refuses to permit the university's quarterback to take snaps from the center.

Any chance yet of the Redskins being pressured by anybody from Washington, D.C., into changing their nickname?

H.N., LOS ALAMOS, N.M.

Naw. Big chief Jack Kent Cooke's warriors still think it's really funny to go around chanting: "We kill Buffalo."

Jackie Gleason was my favorite actor—and aside from being a pool and golf hustler, he was also quite a baseball hitter as a young man, I understand. Where did Gleason usually play baseball?

E.N., MEADOWOOD, DEL.

Kramden Yards.

I don't understand. I know Bo Jackson did it, and I know Deion Sanders did it, and I know that Brian Jordan is now doing it. But how is Mark McGwire able to play professional baseball all the way from February to October, while also playing professional basketball from November until June?

O.A., DEADWOOD, S.D.

That's Mark Aguirre, stupid. Aguirre.

Kansas City is one of the greatest sports towns in the world. Wouldn't you agree, Doc?

J.S., FORT SMITH, ARK.

Oh, sure I would—except I'm still pretty angry about losing my recent wager that the Chiefs would win more games in one season than the Royals.

My friends and I were wondering, where would you rate Green Bay's chances of making it to the Super Bowl?

L.I., CINCINNATI

Right behind Japan's.

Why was that guy in the movie "The Treasure of Sierra Madre" prejudiced against athletes from the University of Wisconsin? What did we ever do to make that dude so mad?

F.C.D., LA CROSSE, WIS.

I'm not sure. When that bandit said, "Badgers? We don't need no stinking Badgers!" maybe he simply meant that Wisconsin should pull out of the Big Ten now that Penn State is a member ■

In a fever to know what really goes on in the world of sports? Will you feel awful until you find out? Send for a diagnosis to: The Good Doctor, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201—then wait patiently

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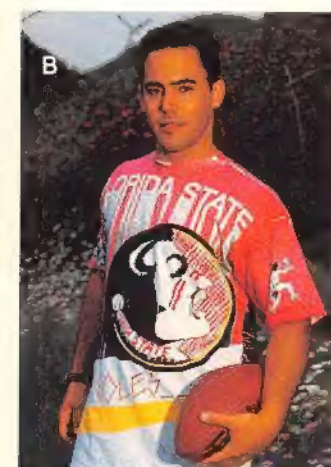


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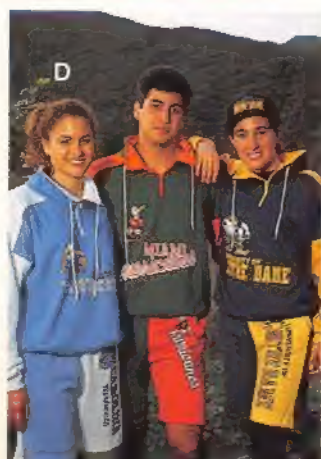


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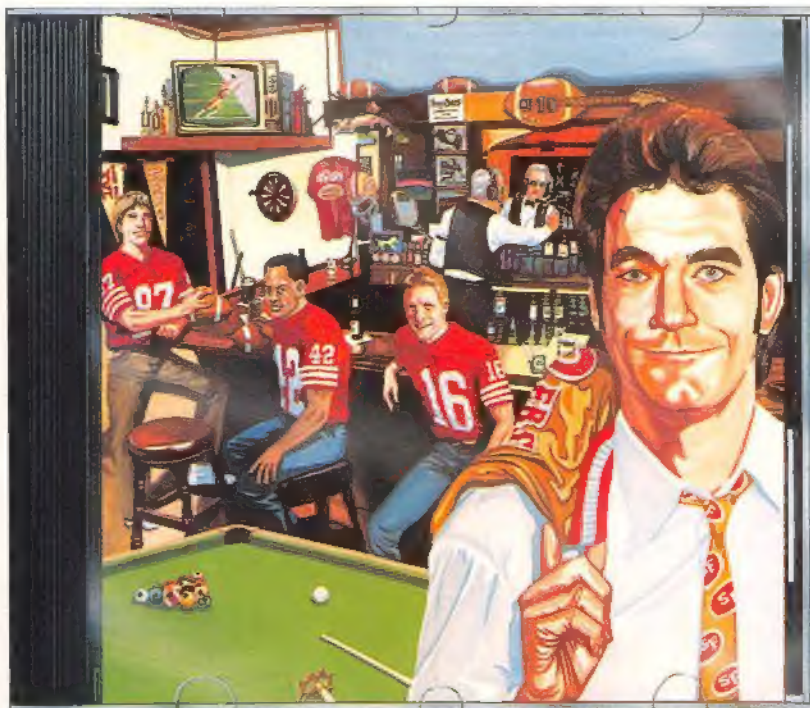
It's Hip To Be a 49er Fan

I GREW UP IN THE San Francisco area, so I have been a 49ers fan all of my life. I met Dwight Clark and Joe Montana at the Bay Area Music Awards around 1980, and they invited me to a game. After that I got to know some of the players, and the thing that struck me was how egoless they all were as compared with show business people and other athletes. They probably were like this because football is really a team sport; everybody relies on everybody else, so their heads don't get as big.

I find that football players are some of the most self-effacing athletes there are, and they really do stick together. That was what was wonderful about the 49ers, I think, in the 1980s: There really weren't any cliques. The defensive players got along with the offensive players, the black guys got along with the white guys. Everybody was part of this one family.

I see tons of positives in the 49ers' season last year. Here was a team that lost Ronnie Lott and Roger Craig, lost Joe Montana for the whole season, and lost Steve Young for half the season, and it comes within a Hail Mary in the Atlanta game of winning the division. I think that everybody agrees they were probably one of the three best teams in the NFL by the end of the year, even without Montana. I don't think anything is broken, I really don't. The 49ers fans have been spoiled a bit by the team's success, but I still think that they're a wonderful football team.

When Lott and Craig went unprotected in Plan B, I thought, "It's a nasty business, pro football." Obviously, I was sorry to see it happen. Anytime you get rid of Ronnie Lott, it can't be good. Pro sports is a real tough business.



The thing that struck me about the 49ers was how egoless they were compared with show business people and other athletes. Football really is a team sport; everybody relies on everybody else.

I don't see any quarterback controversy this upcoming season. You have to give the job to Montana; until he loses it, I think it's his job. I absolutely would not bet against him making a comeback. I don't think it would be very prudent to write him off. He's the kind of quarterback whose biggest asset is his brain, and it's still real young.

Even if Montana never plays another game, though, he's arguably the best quarterback who ever lived. You know, who knows what's going to happen in the next four years, but you have to understand: The man loves to play football. It's like asking me not to sing. You don't really do it because of your stature or your reputation; when it comes right down to it, you do it because you love to do it.

George Seifert is fantastic. It was one tough job to fill Bill Walsh's shoes and to come in and do as well as he did—I don't know of anybody else who could have done that. I know he's popular, and he does a great job. His demeanor's good; he's serious, and yet he's got a human side, too.

There are a lot of good football teams out there, but you can count on the 49ers being among the five best football teams in the

NFL for a while. As to whether you win a Super Bowl or not, it's the way your breaks go. Super Bowls are a tough thing because there's a lot of luck involved. You could be the best team in the NFL and not win the Super Bowl. You have to peak at the right time, draw the right opponents in the playoffs, get big games when you need them, not have any injuries in the crucial times of the season, and avoid big mistakes—and that's a lot of ifs.

Take the year the 49ers barely beat the Cincinnati Bengals at Miami in the Super Bowl after the 1988 season. There was a lot of talk about whether

Walsh had lost it, that this was the end of the run for the 49ers because they were so good the previous year. They had a pretty good year—not a fantastic year—and then they really jelled as a football team. In the playoffs they beat the Chicago Bears at Soldier Field on a day when the wind chill was 20 below and everyone was saying that the Bears defense was unstoppable. That victory right there proved what a great football team that was. If the 49ers had lost to the Bengals in the Super Bowl people would have said, "Oh, well, it was just an average year." But the fact is, here was a football team that sucked up all the disappointment from the previous year [when the 49ers lost to the Minnesota Vikings] and won it all.

You basically have to get the breaks to win Super Bowls, and I think the 49ers have had the breaks to win them, too. I just think that the 49ers are, if not the best, then one of the two best teams in the last 10 to 15 years—no question. ■

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